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Ideologies of Motherhood:
Literary Imaginaries and Public Discourses

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Ideologies of Motherhood:
Literary Imaginaries and Public Discourses

by

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Dedication

<To all *Rabenmütter*, especially my grandmother Franziska, who after WWII was an *immoral* single mother, and my mother Veronika, who did not give up her work when I was born. These two women have been incredibly inspiring role models and I owe them a lot.>

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Ideologies of Motherhood:
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Compared to other industrialized Western nations, the number of female professionals in Germany remains low, and fewer women combine a career with raising children. Public debates repeatedly argue that only stay-at-home moms can secure the ideal upbringing of children. This contemporary German social phenomenon is examined here as a failure of Germany's shared social imaginary to provide images of alternative social roles for adult females. To do so, this dissertation traces discourses about motherhood and female identity construction reflected in German novels since the nation's 1871 foundation, demonstrating the persistence of a limited number of images of female identities that constrain "acceptable" roles for women to family contexts. The study, however, does not seek a complete history of Germany's maternal images, but rather provides an archive of persistent and visible gender identity scripts inscribed into Germany's social imaginary and secured by law, custom, and usage in the public—to fill a lacuna in understanding the century-old dominant ideologies about women that sets Germany apart from other European nations and the US.

Setting the scene by examining the available roles for women in literary works dating to the Wilhelmine Empire at the end of the dissertation's introductory chapter, I

then address selected highly visible German novels written during the Weimar Republic (Vicki Baum), the Third Reich (Ina Seidel), West Germany's early postwar period (Heinrich Böll), West Germany from 1968 to 1989 (Gabriele Wohmann), and postreunification (Hera Lind). As I argue in my conclusion, a close look at the public perception of motherhood as manifested in these popular, visible narratives suggests that, despite the nation's multiple transformations, the novelistic rhetoric about women's roles scarcely changed, even if state ideologies and legalities did. They still state or insinuate that there is no "suitable" place for women outside the nuclear family. This result is significant because novels provide descriptions of women's roles as mothers that become memorable and hence "true" for many of their readers, who reproduce the images as "normal" within social reality—there are few literary counterimages that might foster the emergence of alternative roles for German women in the twenty-first century.

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Introduction

As the historian Cornelie Usborne explains, conservatives during the Weimar period frequently argued that, because of the New Woman's attitudes toward marriage and childbearing, the German family was in crisis (137). Whether because they indulged in hedonistic pleasures or sought liberation in other forms, these women were accused of denying the state the offspring supposedly necessary for Germany's survival. Interestingly, Carrie Smith-Prei points out that, in the 2000s, the German family still seems "to be in fundamental need of salvation" (*Satirizing* 76). Like the young women in the Weimar era, German feminists today still are blamed for low birthrates and their failure to dedicate their lives to their families. Feminist thinking is frequently disparaged as responsible for the fact that some women choose to pursue careers rather than starting families or refuse to relinquish careers to stay at home with their children (*Satirizing* 88).

However, these attitudes are not new. Over a period of more than eighty years exemplars of German public debates have remained a consistent thread in popular representations of women without children spurning their "social duty" as mothers for "selfish" reasons. And when they continue in gainful employment after having children, they are castigated by politicians and in German media—as the associated debate about

Rabenmütter shows[1]—based on the presumption that only stay-at-home moms can secure the ideal upbringing of children. Remarkably, public discussions and perceptions of combining a career with raising children in other industrialized Western nations like France, the UK, or the US seemingly have taken a different path in the same era, addressing concerns about the two-income family but not by denigrating working mothers.[2] My project, then, originates in this observation: Germany's public discourse on a mother's lifetime role as caregiver has persisted over the course of a century, seemingly related to the particularities of German history and its cultural identity.

This project shares an assumption with Carrie Smith-Prei: the belief that representations of women and public discourses intersect in what I will call a shared social imaginary about the family and traditional gender roles as central to German cultural identity. That social imaginary finds one expression in representations of German women in novels since the *Kaiserreich*, a corpus which, as we shall see, features a set of limited, seemingly static images of mothers and mothering which continue to proscribe the range of "acceptable" roles for adult females (especially roles outside the home) in contemporary German society.

To set up this study, I will first outline the case for addressing novels as cultural

[1] *Rabenmütter* in German translates literally as "raven mothers." Yet the word also generally refers to loveless mothers supposedly neglecting their children. Based on the observation of young ravens leaving the nest too early, that is before they can fly, onlookers in the past assumed their mothers were inattentive and felt indifferent about their offspring. Martin Luther seemingly interpreted the birds' behavior this way, too, and with his translation of the Old Testament, the word *Rabenmutter* was first used in a derogatory manner to describe a human mother. What is lesser known, however, is the fact that raven mothers continue to feed and protect their young for weeks after they left the safety of the nest. See Duden dictionary entry "Rabenmutter, die."

[2] See Elisabeth Badinter, and Ann Taylor Allen.

forms related to discourses in the social imaginary and as related to issues of power and identity within social reality. A discussion of the legal and social assumptions present in the Wilhelmine Empire will set the scene for the five case studies I will explore; from there the discussion will move to representations of women as mothers in highly visible German novels written during the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, West Germany's early postwar period and the period between 1968 and 1989, and postreunification Germany. The historical case studies presented begin with the Weimar Republic because of this era's association with the "New Woman"—a nascent feminist movement, ostensibly leading to social conditions that enabled lasting positive changes for German women. Novels from later periods bear witness to profound change in the geographical, political, and cultural identity of Germany. The conclusion of this study will return to the question of a shared social imaginary and the discourses related to it that need to be considered to produce, reproduce, and (sometimes) revolutionize identities available within a society.

Because of its focus on correlations between social identities constructed by historical forces and novelistic representations, my study stresses the social construction of identity rather than the psychoanalytic models that the majority of feminist scholarship from the latter twentieth century has stressed. Early feminist texts like Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) inaugurated a long tradition of investigating how individuals "became mothers" in terms recognized by their societies. Nonetheless, these models *assumed* the existence of discourse tropes and life scripts that these women internalized rather than asking how they were established and circulated. In

contrast, the case studies presented here identify literary representations that correspond to the public issues familiar to their times and model how particular texts were created and adapted to become publicly visible (and often popular or bestselling) to a large audience at the time they were published. That is, in this project, literary texts figure as part of public conversations between authors and their publics, often steered by publishers or editors who made assumptions about which images would best conform to their readers' expectations.

This project will thus contribute to scholarship on the representation of mothers and motherhood in German literature by closely correlating literary texts to Germany's historical evolution, and demonstrating how these texts provide prominent images and narratives that clearly answered to public sentiment and specific moments in communities and the nation. As such, many popular novels tend to support the hegemonic narratives of their cultural moments and help to crystalize public consciousness—or to create that consciousness as a shared social imaginary, a *presumed* set of real power and social relationships. As a result, my findings amplify, but also call into question, many previous scholarly interpretations of the mother figure in visible canonical texts and "popular literature" alike. Taking novels and their publics as part of a conversation situated in history and effectively real to readers but not necessarily real in a documentary sense allows me to address several different aspects of cultural identity politics that most prior critics have largely ignored. These texts, in short, are capable of both disseminating and reifying how women, mothers, and the family are meant to be understood—and they have the capacity to illustrate the currency of these images from

the past in Germany today, particularly because new generations of readers continue to confront them.

Before continuing it is necessary to first clarify how novels can legitimately be considered part of the historical process around individual and group political and social identities as part of an evolving social imaginary. The following sections of this introduction will address how this project is conceived and how it will be pursued. First, I will explain my choices regarding the approach to the topic and the material to be considered, including the genre of the novel in its relation to my project. I then provide an outline of the project's case studies tracing the discourses on and representations of motherhood in German novels across time. The subsequent part of this chapter will then highlight how mining a text for representations and discourses offers insights into Germany's shared social imaginary, which in turn reveals society's underlying power structures, ideologies, and social inequalities. Finally, this chapter will conclude with an outline of some of the roots of bourgeois femininity and the master narrative inherent in the literary representations of the Wilhelmine Empire, a set of images and discourse tropes that will, as we shall see, persist into twentieth-century representations of mothers and the family.

DISCOURSES AND LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS: FINDING THE CORPUS

This project, as noted above, seeks to illuminate the interplay between literary representations of women as mothers and other public discourses in order to gain insight into Germany's shared public imaginary about its cultural identity. I will thus briefly

clarify how I conceive of the term "discourse" for the purpose of this project, before moving on to the specific rationale for including novelistic discourses as part of public conversations.

Across the social sciences, the term "discourse" is used in a general sense to encompass not only language, but also the visual images and other cultural artifacts that function as meaningful systems that express or mark ideological and dialectical positions. Simultaneously, "discourse" is also used more specifically, to differentiate how various discourses present different aspects of the world. In the context of my study, relying on the definition of Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak (1997) seems most fruitful as these scholars see discourse as a form of social practice:

> Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structures(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned—it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects—that is they can help to produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the way in which they represent things and position people. (258)

Discourses thus are treated here as representing the socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned ways women, mothers, and motherhood can be "spoken of," in texts as discursive events, each of which may influence Germany's shared social imaginary as they circulate images of the available social roles for women in German society.

Such an assumption is not overstated since current research posits that texts can have causal effects upon, and contribute to changes, in people (beliefs, attitudes, etc.), actions, social relations, and the material world (Bourdieu; Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*). Hence, texts not only *reflect* (codify social expectations) and chart discourses, but they also can serve models for how individuals, that is the producers of texts, can become active agents in conversations that critique, project, and occlude dominant ideologies. The concept of texts as discursive events, however, does not encompass only written cultural artifacts such as, for instance, novels or magazine articles, but also television programs or films.

When assembling the corpus for this project, I thus examined a variety of media sources with the potential to influence a German mass audience that would allow me to investigate the representation of women as mothers. The mass appeal of these sources is particularly important, since only images that have resonated with broad sections of society as a whole and that have subsequently been internalized by a large group of the population, allow one to draw conclusions about German society's shared social imaginary. Based on this premise, I thus explored films as potential material for my case studies. However, during the Weimar Republic, depictions of mothers and mothering appear to be vastly absent in highly visible films.[3] Similarly, as Sabine Hake observes, "even during the late 1930s and early 1940s, the identification of the feminine with the maternal remained the exception in a popular cinema dominated by single career women

[3] In a paper entitled "The Missing Mothers of Weimar Cinema," which I presented at the annual GSA conference on October 6, 2013, I make the case that mothers are strikingly absent from the era's most visible and popular films. Instead, Weimar Cinema highlights father-son or father-daughter relationships, despite the historical facts that after WWI, women with children dominated the public realm.

and childless society wives" (126).[4] Mother characters found their way onto the movie screen to a greater extent only after WWII, predominantly in the genre of the *Heimatfilm*. Already beginning with the 1960s, however, the portrayal of women with children in German films is on the decline again. New German Cinema largely ignores women in their roles as mothers. Moreover, it only "found a modest domestic following" (Rentschler 264). Likewise, "in the 1980s only a handful of German films, almost without exception comedies featuring television stars (Otto Waalkes, Didi Hallervorden, Gerhard Polt and Loriot) . . . would become box-office hits" (Rentschler 262), and none of these films depict women as mothers. Finally, post-*Wende* a number of highly visible films feature mother characters again, most famously *Das Superweib* (1997), a comedy based on the bestselling novel by Hera Lind.

When analyzing the representation of women as mothers, films can thus only partially serve as a productive data source for my project. The same applies to magazines, for reasons I will elaborate more on later in this chapter. In contrast, when I conducted a survey of widely read German novels at the onset of this project, I frequently found depictions of mothers and motherhood in bestsellers. Thus, these literary representations, circulating images of the available social roles for women in German society to a large part of the population, offer a promising avenue through which one can access a broader view of Germany's shared social imaginary regarding ideologies of motherhood.

[4] Likewise, representations of the maternal in the widely read propaganda magazine *Signal* are strikingly scarce. In a sample of 103 issues that I examined, only 26 articles featured images of women labeled as mothers. Remarkably, however, children were usually not portrayed together with their mothers. Instead, they would be shown in the care of nurses or other professionals in institutionalized settings, underscoring the role of the state, not the family, in raising these children. I explore this topic more extensively in my unpublished manuscript,"The Instrumentalized and Missing Mothers in *Signal*."

Moreover, as Claudia Durst Johnson and Vernon Johnson point out in *The Social Impact of the Novel*, the modern novel has, from its beginnings, shown itself to be exceptionally well-suited to exploring social ideas and social protest, both as representations and as agents of transformation of the hearts and minds of its readership. In the German case, the genre of the novel and its tradition of contesting social norms and revisiting relevant historical concepts can easily be traced back to the end of feudal oppression and development of the bourgeoisie in the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Faulstich 19). In addition, a great number of novels remain in the European literary canon, remembered for having guided their cultures by challenging stereotypes, protesting against social inequalities, and creating figures and heroes to inspire imitation.

Nonetheless, a number of scholars still take the realism associated with the novel as an accurate representation of aspects of society that exist within a certain society. For example, Alan Bance takes up the novel as rooted in an "objective" appraisal of everyday life (1) and thus as a natural vehicle for the (re)assessment of cultural, social, and ethical values and practical pathways to their realization (3). I would stress here, however, that the representations serve more as a discursive reality rather than an objective one: discourses in the novel can be seen as realistic because they represent collective expectations of the publics for whom they were written. Thus, I second literary scholar Deborah Philips, who embraces the notion that the "novel may not be a barometer of social history, and is never a simple reflection of its times, but what it can do is to chart the limits and shifts in social discourse, and so offer insights into what can and cannot be

fantasized about and publically acknowledged" (3). In other words, novels provide a palimpsest of the public imaginary.

My study assumes that the novel also helps readers understand what conversations were in place in a given historical time and place. A novel's representations crystalize facets of the cultural imagination embedded in the shared historical context of the writer and readers, in their socialization as members of their culture, and in their understandings of historical events. In doing so, it transforms potential tropes and narrative elements into stories that confront public issues. Fictional representations thus move beyond merely mirroring contemporary realities, to encourage readers to judge them in light of social expectations, social morality, and legal ethics that impact the characters represented, or perhaps as encountered in other public texts (newspapers, magazines). That is, novels engage in conversation with the public.

Furthermore, novels not only permit the writer a more extensive character and plot development than the short story, the drama, or poetry, but they also have the capacity to portray a problematic in great depth and over an extended period of time. In offering more complex windows into the questions to be addressed in this project, novels thus also contrast with popular magazines, which generally feature contributions that are short and mostly cater to their readers' specific interests. While novels are driven by the ideas, themes, and concerns of the novelist, often producing a narrative that can be controversial and read in more than one way, writing for popular magazines generally requires authors to adhere to the publication's format, which is intended to attract a specific segment of readers. In clarifying the discourses at play in my sample novels, I

will, therefore, at times turn to popular magazines as they help to illuminate the reception of the texts within a particular audience.

The novels chosen as case studies here all enjoyed contemporaneous visibility. These texts either resonated with broad sections of their society as a whole (novels with a documented large number of readers), or had a documented impact on specific reading communities, influencing public discourses or at least resonating widely. Consequently, the selected case studies were bestsellers reprinted over several decades, with many remaining in print. Others became classics in the literary canon because they have been seen as "representative." Also addressed are books with a possibly smaller initial impact—purportedly obscure works that nonetheless had claims to being important within their historical and cultural contexts for more limited, but very specific audiences. Curiously, many of these novels have remained largely unacknowledged by mainstream literary and feminist criticism, despite the fact that the selected narratives attracted large audiences—documented by sales numbers, library records, and their ubiquity in secondhand bookshops.

The novels included here are thus all chosen for their visibility as exemplary hallmarks of their era's discourses on women and motherhood, regardless of their status as high or popular literature.[5] They have reflected and influenced the way individuals within discourse communities think and act within society, either at the time of their appearance or in their later revivals. As such, many have been problematic for critics

[5] The term in German would be *Trivialliteratur*. When referring to "Trivialliteratur" I rely on the definition by Dorothee Bayer, who not only equates it with genres like"Unterhaltungsroman" in contrast to high literature, but also as a medium that "spricht besonders das weibliche Lesepublikum an" (8).

because they shared with the so-called "popular novel" a desire to entertain while likewise displaying "some literary merit" in voicing social criticism. I value these texts as exemplary in their relationship to the questions at the core of this project rather than as representative books in terms of characteristics such as stylistics or themes produced during a specific era. The discourses they present match a particular aspect of a historical fact. What these books share is thus that they can be recognized as "popular" works of fiction in the sense that their narratives portray, discuss, and critique dilemmas "typical for" their era, if not experienced by most adult German women of that time. This characteristic, in turn, might explain why most (but not all) of these books were written by women, although the conversations they enter into implicate both female and male authors interested in their era's women's question. This study, however, is not concerned with an author's gender, but rather with the range of *imaginable* social roles for German women conveyed in highly visible novels, which in turn reflected the limited social options available to them in reality. The fact that many of the novelists in my sample are women was thus not intended, but is a result of the combined criteria of topic and visibility.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, my sample novels also have been carefully chosen to exemplarily illustrate who is supporting the static representations and discourses on women as mothers: namely, the male-dominated literary establishment. As I will document in my case studies, publishers and critics are heavily invested in maintaining the *status quo* regarding ideologies of motherhood and are thus largely responsible for preventing alternative social roles for German women from arising. While

pretending to merely fulfill the desires of their readership, I will argue that the literary industry actively encourages novels intended for a mass market to conform to traditional maternal images. However, as my project reveals, it is not the reader, but the interests of influential individuals and the state that these measures serve.

In this study, novels will figure into five case studies, each investigating the interaction between public discourses on motherhood and representations of women as mothers in German novels written during the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, the early and late West German postwar period, and the postreunification era. As Germany's geographical and political identities were transformed, so, too, were public perceptions of the "women's place." Yet these periods' highly visible novels document the fact that, despite Germany's various transformations, the rhetoric of Germany's social imaginary about women's position in society continued to suggest that women who were mothers belong at home with their children and should ideally eschew all work or entertainment that could impinge on full-time caregiving.

An exception occurs during the time the German Democratic Republic (GDR) existed. The East German state invested much effort into changing the public perception of working mothers, since its survival depended on women in the workforce.[6] Nevertheless, and despite discrepancies in the official gender politics of both German states, the notion of the GDR as a paradise for emancipated, independent women has been challenged by scholars. As, for instance, the studies by Sabine Berghahn (1993) as well as those by Jutta Gysi and Dagmar Meyer (1993) demonstrate, the identities of adult

[6] See Gysi and Meyer 139-65.

women in the GDR were similarly constrained by the role of the motherhood. Moreover, these women, as primarily working mothers, in fact had to face a great number of difficulties. Against this background, it is thus little surprise to find that depictions of East German mothers frequently also highlight the problematic relationship between work and motherhood. Prime examples constitute, for instance, Maxi Wander's *Guten Morgen, Du Schöne. Frauen in der DDR: Protokolle* (1980), or Irmtraud Morgner's novel *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura. Roman in dreizehn Büchern und sieben Intermezzos* (1975). While the limited scope of this dissertation does not allow for an in-depth exploration of this topic, this is an area in which further research needs to be done. However, since the bourgeois family and its structures were harshly criticized, and the working mother became the social ideal in the GDR, my project focuses on postwar narratives originating in West Germany. Only post-*Wende* will I return to ideologies of motherhood exhibited in the east, as some profound changes in the social imaginary occur after 1989.

While Germany's reunification marks the end of my project, the final section of this introductory chapter addresses why the *Kaiserreich* serves as my point of departure: it marks the moment when, for the first time in history, one can speak of Germany as having both a state and a nation with some kind of common public discourses influencing the living conditions of German women—notably the first common laws, such as the Civil Marriage Law. At the close of this chapter I will elaborate briefly on how the novels of this period, written by both men and women, depicted women in subordinate roles, subject to their family's decisions in making their marriages, and subsequently

subordinated to whomever was chosen to regulate their lives. As the later sections of my project suggest, subsequent novels continue to reify discourses of the nineteenth-century bourgeois family, in which the woman becomes the ornament of the home, pleasing her husband and raising healthy, happy children.

To validate this thesis, each case study features as its centerpiece a single novelistic text familiar to a determinable reading audience at the time (and sometimes, since then). Whether it affirms or challenges German society's dominant imaginary about ideologies of motherhood, the novel was chosen as a visible exemplar of that era's discourses on women and motherhood. The analysis of each centerpiece will be complemented by reference to a either a cluster of novels, popular magazines, films, or other texts, that further illuminate the novel's representations and clarify the centerpiece novel's active agency in critiquing the discourses at play at the particular moment in history.

In taking this approach to understanding these novels as representative of public discourses on women and their roles as mothers, I will be mining my chosen sample novels for ways that they represent women as mothers and motherhood rather than aiming at providing an exhaustive interpretation of each. Hence, I will examine key themes and scenes that demonstrate how the texts construct motherhood by investigating a set of intertextual reference points to demonstrate how these junctures illuminate prevailing ideologies of German women: scenes presenting adult females and showing their relationships with their own mothers, fathers, husbands, children, public figures of authority, and their environment—all selected because they reveal how socially

acceptable activities for women are framed. In doing so, as noted above, I will analyze and evaluate representations from one novel in depth and briefly discuss a cluster of other works (novels, films, magazines) showing either similar or diverging representations.

As a first step in each case study I will contextualize my chosen novel by giving an overview of the era's economic, sociopolitical and legal frameworks that condition the discourses on motherhood depicted in the selected literary representations. Thereafter, I will anchor my analyses with information about each author's biography, statements about their work, publication conditions (including information on the publishers as active agents in controlling and steering the publication process), plot summary (as a conventional story or script), readers' and critics' responses and perceptions of the text, an overview of dominant public debates, and influential political and philosophical writings, including those found in secondary literature. Against this backdrop, then, each case study will turn to an analysis of the individual narratives' key themes and scenes connecting them to the particular era's dominant discourses on motherhood. This examination includes close readings of selected passages of each novel and an analysis of plot structure, the use of narrative technique, the individualized speech of characters, and their specific heteroglossia—the different socially conditioned voices and views from the shared social imaginary that they express in the novel.[7]

My first—and largest—case study explores in two chapters the representation of mothers during the Weimar Republic, supposedly a major site of the newly liberated

[7] I borrow the term heteroglossia from Bakhtin, who argues that the heteroglossia of the novel with its multiple social perspectives "constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. It serves . . . the direct intentions of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (Bakhtin 324).

woman. Chapter one will contextualize the novels to be discussed: Lou Andreas-Salomé's *Das Haus* (1921), Annette Kolb's *Daphne Herbst* (1928), Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi—Eine von uns* (1931), and, as the center piece of my analysis, Vicki Baum's *Stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* (1926). Subsequently, Chapter two will turn to passages from these texts. As my analysis will demonstrate, images of helpless, defenseless, and economically dependent women prevail. The novels illustrate that while marriage and family remain oppressive, they are the only viable options for women who wish simply to be able to survive and provide for whatever families they might have. This central message, namely that women cannot survive without the help of men, was heavily promoted by the literary establishment. Related to this, I will briefly survey highly visible narratives from other Western nations at the end of this chapter. In doing so, I illustrate, that, although contemporaneous French and American novels depict women as mothers, too, their main protagonists—in contrast to their German peers—openly revolt against established gender conventions, highlighting the particularities of the German literary landscape.

With the beginning of the Third Reich, National Socialists recast motherhood into a prestigious social status for women who chose to become "the mothers of the fatherland." The centerpiece text illustrating this point in chapter three is Ina Seidel's *Das Wunschkind* (1930). Although Seidel's book was published during the Weimar Republic, I chose to include the work here, for two reasons. First, it became a bestseller only after the Weimar era ended, because it was, in essence, a novel that accommodated the Nazi ideal of womanhood. Second, but more importantly, the author, an outspoken supporter

of National Socialism, glorifies in her novel the role of women as mothers to an extent that no other work of this period does and serves as model for subsequent literary representations of motherhood that embraced Nazi ideology. As we shall see, the Nazi literary industry thus had a strong interested in promoting Seidel's novel. Supporting novels in this case study are Otto Flake's novel *Die Töchter Noras* (1934), which directly criticizes Ibsen's Nora, as well as Josefa Berens-Totenohl's *Der Femhof* (1934), a bestseller that like *Das Wunschkind* remained popular after 1945. This circumstance can perhaps be explained by the fact that these two novels depict female protagonists who face positive futures as mothers. Separated from husbands, they experience positive results from their independence from men and the possibility of combining work with motherhood. At the same time, these novels anchor the figure of the mother in her importance for the survival of the German nation. I will conclude the chapter with a short review of representation of women in contemporaneous Italian novels to highlight the subtle, seemingly nationally based nuances in depictions of motherhood, despite the numerous ideological similarities between Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy.

In chapter four I will focus on the representation of motherhood in Heinrich Böll's *Haus ohne Hüter* (1954) written in the early postwar period—a novel that became popular only slowly, but which has remained central for German readers, though not for scholars. Here, rearing children, the completion of domestic chores, and caring for their husbands still mark "good," *moral* adult women. In contrast, females who try to escape traditional gender roles become social outcasts. In this chapter, given the paucity of novels addressing the role of mothers during the early postwar years, my documentation

shifts. Instead of a cluster of supporting novels, I survey the popular contemporaneous discourses in the women's magazine *Constanze* and images of motherhood in the era's most popular feature films in order to situate Böll's representations vis-à-vis indirect publisher editing suggestions the author encountered prior to publication. I will also examine how the publishing industry subjected his work to editing that blunted its initially intended social address. Strikingly, the images found in *Constanze* as well as popular films from the era confirm those inherent in Böll's novel: Germany's Zero Hour remained a null point in terms of fresh impulses for women's social imaginary. Although women contributed actively to rebuilding the country in various ways, female representations do not reflect this. Despite *Haus ohne Hüter's* history of modifications reflecting contemporary political policies, their dominant aesthetics, and popular narratives, Böll's narrative can very well be read as a novel offering not only a critique of the bourgeois family. It also presents a distinct female perspective, which might explain its documented lasting popularity among a broad female readership.

Chapter five takes up the political turning point of 1968, when women began to revolt openly against gender inequality and the limited roles society assigned to them. Gabriele Wohmann's *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* (1974) will be discussed as situated between the avant-garde and popular women's literature. Wohmann's novel challenges the social *status quo* in her depiction of the heroine as the prototype of her era's newly emancipated woman, yet it does not transform the traditional social imaginary. Here again, I will again contextualize Wohmann's text though reference to the representations of women in a popular women's magazine, this time *Brigitte*. Feminist critics have long

held up Wohmann's work as a warning example of "bad" mainstream women's literature that constrains women. However, a more detailed look at the details of the novel's publication reveals a somewhat different face to Wohmann's popular (rather than critical) successes. Related to that, I will discuss the role of her secret editor, Marcel Reich-Ranicki, arguably the most influential German postwar literary critic and a representative of the male-dominated literary establishment.

To conclude the case studies, chapter six addresses how the dominant representations of mothers in fictional narratives written after 1989 still frame the social roles for German women as either/or choices: the successful combination of motherhood and a career, as an analysis of Hera Lind's bestseller *Das Superweib* (1994) will illustrate, can only happen as an exception to the rule. As my analysis will demonstrate, the novel's revolutionary message about a woman's role in German society was only able to reach a mass audience because it was camouflaged as a modern fairy tale. The chapter closes with a brief discussion of two contemporary novels, Monika Peetz's *Die Dienstagsfrauen* (2010) and Inger-Maria Mahlke's *Rechnung Offen* (2013), which will speak to the available representations of German women in current narratives. As we shall see, what the images of these novels share with their historical antecedents, is, that they still suggest that motherhood, independence, and happiness are virtually irreconcilable in today's German society. Becoming a *Superweib* who can combine these options remains a fairy tale.

Overall, as I argue in my conclusion, this project suggests that despite significant sociopolitical, economic, and legal changes in Germany over the course of almost 150

years, literary representations and discourses on mothers and motherhood remain (with the exception of the National Socialist period) strikingly close to the very similar and consistently negative options depicted in texts prominent in the German reading public since the end of the nineteenth century: "socially acceptable" roles for women and "ideal" mothers still are the norm reproduced in novels of the present generation. My findings reveal profound continuities in the "successful" roles scripted for adult women over this period, leaving few alternatives for the mother and the nuclear family to be reconceived within a the German context. To this day, representations of successful, happy and childless adult women are few and far between within Germany's cultural imaginary. The available literary discourses in reunited Germany still refer to the married, stay-at-home mother as the social ideal—these texts continue to reproduce century-old ideologies about women in society. Despite the wider positive options open to women in German society today, the social imaginary still embraces limited socially "acceptable" roles for adult women living in German society, especially the domestic mother, the "stay-at-home mom," rather than women who wish to explore a range of alternative lifestyles or family models.

My project also makes a direct contribution to revealing the strategies used to keep these ideals in place. Based on evidence in my case studies, I demonstrate that the lack of diverging female representations in each historical period directly connects to the male-dominated publishing industry and literary establishment. As will be amplified in the next section of this introduction, studies of the "realist novel" as part of a shared social imaginary require us to reflect on what readers do—what they choose and what

they consume. This project thus not only reveals a regressive thread in German culture and social imaginary, but also reveals the strategies of scholars who have investigated the (re)production of dominance through gendered ideals. A study of the tropes and narratives of motherhood within the German context calls for this literary *status quo* to change by exposing who is responsible and who benefits from the static representations and discourses on women as mothers. Before continuing, a brief discussion of the theoretical bases for these assertions will be useful.

READING THE PUBLIC IMAGINARY AND AVAILABLE ROLES FOR WOMEN IN SOCIAL REALITY

The novels that figure in this study, as noted above, do more than reflect reality. I have stated that they were part of the "social imaginary" of their eras. My adoption of this term rests on a particular model, building on Louis Althusser, of how and why individuals are interpellated into the space of culture as they assimilate the tropes and stories within it. This nominalized use of the word "imaginary" originated with the French psychoanalyst and identity theorist Jacques Lacan. He defines the "imaginary" as an "order" within discourse, along with the "symbolic" and the "semiotic," all of which play significant roles in the formation of the ego during the "mirror stage" in infant development, a concept developed by Lacan. He extends the idea of an infant's first negotiation between an internal self and an external image reflected in a mirror, dividing its sense of self between its own internal perception and the outer form in the reflection.

The self turns into an "imago," an image of self within the world as imagined by the individual (in her "imaginary"). However, that imaginary is not original to that individual, it is structured not only by an experience, but also by what Lacan called a society's "symbolic order"—the arrangement of signifiers that a society uses to manage its identity and that of its members. Individuals' "imaginaries" are built up with reference to this symbolic order, which provides the tropes, narratives, and elements that they use to manage their own identities. Moreover, the symbolic order can change over time, as individuals seek correlates for their experiences, and take up elements from the "semiotic," the order of potentially symbolic elements that are not (yet) or were in the past meaningful, but which at the moment of encounter are not part of the hegemonic discourses of the symbolic order.

Lacan's work focuses particularly on psychological identity formation with respect to public discourses, but can be expanded to help model the role that novels play within the symbolic order, as stories and representations that engage public consciousness about widely shared experiences. Such shared perceptions, in turn, can become part of the symbolic order as a public space of identity production. Given its potential to illuminate shifts in cultural attitudes, behaviors, and social norms, Lacan's model has been appropriated and expanded by theorists of various fields. In this project, I rely on the definition by sociologist John B. Thompson, who explains how individuals evolve a social imaginary to help them understand the material condition of human life. He defines the social imaginary as a common domain that supports, influences, and reflects the infinite variety of ways human beings create and organize living together (Thompson 23).

Hence, the social imaginary shapes any given society in so far as each individual of this society can only do what she or he can *imagine* doing—what this shared imaginary makes *thinkable* for that society.

Accordingly, the social imaginary of a nation translates ideas into plausible, thinkable realities for its population, including the available social roles for women. These thinkable realities are reinforced by discourses representing patterns of dominance, and they naturalize unequal hegemonic relations in specified sociohistorical contexts. These hegemonic discourses and patterns of dominance are defined in the works of Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu. Their theories all contribute in various ways to understanding how represented ideologies and discourses produce and sustain relations of domination between different groups in societies. Their names will not occur frequently in this text, but my analyses in the forthcoming chapters are anchored in their critical approaches to literature for reasons I will now briefly summarize.

In contrast to definitions of ideology merely as systematic and characteristic set of "positions, attitudes, beliefs or perspectives, etc. of a social group" (Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse* 9), I find Fairclough's summary of Althusserian ideology helpful. He describes it as a modality of power that works through constituting "persons as social subjects, fixing them in subject positions while at the same time giving them the illusion of being free agents" (Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* 30). How power is connected with social subjects is critical for understanding how women, while seemingly having a choice of roles in German society, are actually subject to illusions, to discourses

that naturalize certain subject positions within the social imaginary. Gramsci's idea of hegemony as a particular way of conceptualizing power and the struggle for power in capitalist societies amplifies the significance of this imaginary. According to his model, power depends on consent and acquiescence conditioned by inheritance and tradition, rather than by force alone. Gramsci suggests that dominant classes maintain control not primarily through violence and political or economic coercion, but instead through the establishment and reenactment of dominant representations through discourse within specified contexts.[8] Propagating the values and norms of the elite as seemingly natural to all other classes, for instance, such discourses and the representations they disseminate can inculcate perspectives and contexts into dominated individuals that lead them, the dominated, to identify with the dominant. Discourses also help to maintain the social *status quo*. German women are thus not pressured into becoming mothers by violence or social pressure, but rather by accepting the role of the mother as the "natural" norm.

Michel Foucault defines such discourses as constructing nexes of social subjects and knowledge. His genealogical approach suggests ways in which historical information can be analyzed to show how traditions inculcate individuals with "natural" images of power[9] Foucault insists on the power of such discursive images by calling them epistemes, or discursive formations: that is, the systems of thought and knowledge that operate beneath the consciousness of individual subjects and define a system of conceptual possibilities for what is thinkable and acceptable to think in a given domain

[8] For a more detailed description of this model, see Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, especially pages 7-8.
[9] See Foucault: *Archeology*; *Discipline and Punish; History of Sexuality; Foucault Reader*.

and period. Each particular epistemic formation (a historical site or context) is populated by individuals who have become subjects through discourses instantiating local practices of control and coercion. Each episteme offers social scripts and practices that "form the subjects of which they speak" (*Discipline and Punish* 49), a central focus of any social- or ideology-critical analysis of texts and their function within groups and for identity formation.[10]

In the analyses of novels in the chapters which follow, I am especially interested in discursive continuities and discontinuities—with the latter being the ruptures and breaks in dominant discourses that, according to Foucault, reveal them as social constructions (often during moments of historical change). Yet neither the discourses nor the power/knowledge discourses connected to them can be understood causally: they are not transparently produced by historical forces, nor do they reflect "realities" of a historical moment. When manifestations of these dominant discourses and their breaches are identified in the analyses of representations of motherhood in novels, they can illuminate the "habitual" class and gender inequalities embedded in those discourses, and where the discourses rupture, suggest the limits on a particular era's social imaginary. To explore these manifestations in each of my key texts, I will examine points at which a well-established, traditional representation is specifically altered or twisted—in order to illustrate the limits of tradition, to conform to new sociohistorical stresses, or to engage new social conversations.

[10] See Norbert Elias, *Was ist Soziologie* (1970), where he calls these networks of practice a figuration—a particular historical form of rule-bound social interaction with discourse practices familiar to local users that reveal them as individuals as interdepended on the framework of their social networks.

In this context, Pierre Bourdieu also becomes important for my project. His work illuminates one additional dimension of power: the nature and meaning of the symbolic power resting on the social consensus itself rather than on institutions. Particularly Bourdieu's concept of the "habitus" contributes to our understanding of how power informs discourse practice and can facilitate social domination. The "habitus," as defined by Bourdieu refers to a self-reinforcing system of thought, perception, and action that becomes embodied or regarded as "natural" or "habitual" at the level of the social group, the family, or the individual as its rules for performing membership within that group, both consciously, through decisions, and unconsciously, through body habits, manners, and the like. Thus, the habitus summarizes individuals' conventional sense of how to act and respond in certain ways that are considered appropriate. This includes not only the cognitive patterns present in an individual's imaginary (Lacan) or the laws and conventions of institutions (Foucault), but also what is preserved in the bodies and practices that exist only in the social consensus (including issues like style of dress or interaction), not in any official power. Yet particular practices or forms of behavior should not be seen as the product of the habitus as such, but rather as recoverable evidence of the relationship between the habitus and specific social contexts that Bourdieu calls "structural fields." These fields are, again, structured spaces in which (subject) positions are determined in ways reflecting the group's favored distribution of different resources: for instance, money (economic capital), knowledge (cultural capital), or prestige (symbolic capital).[11]

[11] See Bourdieu: *Language and Symbolic Power.*

These fields will always be sites of struggle, in which individuals seek to maintain or gain specific forms of capital according to their interests, engaging local belief systems and a fundamental (possibly unconscious) consensus about the social value of the capital to be distributed. This in turn leads to individuals' ability to exercise what Bourdieu calls "symbolic power," a concept that refers to an invisible power, deployable by individuals, a power that governs everyday social interactions and behavior in the social hierarchy. The structural field also has cultural dimensions, when it appears in forms like "the field of literary production." In order to understand how a specific field functions, then, a scholar must analyze primary texts in conjunction with contemporary and subsequent secondary sources and with ancillary sources from the period, allowing for a historicization of the work as a distinct site of performance, as contemporary hermeneutics would also insist (Szondi).

At this point, theories of social power, the social imaginary, and subject formation necessarily intersect with more traditional approaches to text interpretation. As a "Theorie des Verstehens" (Szondi 11), literary hermeneutics has been understood as primarily concerned with the interpretation of texts, elucidating the dialectic relationship between text, reader, and their interactions, against the ground of information that cannot be found in the work itself but which is presumed by it—the interdependence of text and context. In consequence, aside from the work of Peter Szondi, the models of Wolfgang Iser, and Hans-Robert Jauss are significant for my study in outlining how the reader responds to and receives texts, how a habituated and learned reader response figures in the process of meaning-making, and how the reader's "horizon of expectations" (a term

that amplifies the idea of an imaginary—derived from phenomenology and popularized by Iser, which), interacts with and contributes to the effects of a text as an event performed by a particular subject.

Taken together, these theories support my method of using analyses of texts to illuminate sociohistorical processes, not necessarily as they were, but as they were intended to be seen within the various communities (cultures and subcultures) that can be constituted within a discourse community. Furthermore, based on these theories each of my case studies will combine close readings, historical contextualization (e.g., laws, philosophical writings), sociological consideration, discussions of authorial intent, and reader reception. In doing so, the individual case studies serve not only as a snapshot of a moment in time as preserved in a text and its known contemporaneous intertexts, with the goal of providing insight about what kinds of propositions can affect (intervene in, support) mainstream views about women's roles in society, they also demonstrate how these narratives contribute to restricting the choice of acceptable social roles for adult German women to that of the mother

SETTING THE SCENE: THE ROOTS OF BOURGEOIS FEMININITY AND THE WILHELMINE FAMILY

To trace Germany's static discourses on "the women question," I would now like to visit notions of femininity and the bourgeois family that contributed to the social imaginary as the German nation first unified, after 1870. The following, final section of

this introduction, makes the case that ideals of late eighteenth-century femininity as well as those of the nineteenth-century bourgeois family become the blueprint for the archetypical (nuclear) family of the Wilhelmine Empire, defining a woman's place in unified German society. These ideas mark the beginning of an ideology within the German national frame that leaves little room for adult females outside the private sphere of their homes and influences the conception of "socially acceptable" roles for women ever since.

In her study *Geschlechtergeschichte als Gesellschaftgeschichte* (2012), historian Karin Hausen documents in extensive detail the change of German women's roles in society over more than two centuries. For the purpose of this study, especially her findings regarding the continuous restriction of what tasks were considered "appropriate" for adult women to engage in constitute significant reference points for our understanding of the roles of women in a newly united Germany. Hausen, like Silvia Bovenschen in her influential work *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit* (1979), argues for the shift at the end of the eighteenth century away from a more egalitarian notion of gender grounded in earlier periods' extended family model as well as the house not only as a home, but also as a workplace, toward more rigid gender norms. In the course of the nineteenth century in Germany, the nuclear family emerged as a reference point as work relocated outside the home.

Bovenschen adds a critical factor to Hausen's argument by pointing out that the ideal of the educated, professional woman who was able to support herself and her family during this time effectively disappeared (139-49). Both scholars emphasize that, as a

direct result of the changes regarding a women's daily responsibilities and the growing assumption that women were fundamentally different from men, the social status of women in society declined: a woman's "natural profession" (Bovenschen 147) based on her presumed "gender characteristics" (Hausen 19) becomes that of the housewife and caretaker of her children.[12]

With the rise of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the educated middle class, primarily civil servants and academics as the German Empire evolved, these new definitions of femininity spread during the nineteenth century, not only in terms of domesticity and supposedly specific female virtues, but particularly regarding women as mothers providing "education fitting the social position" for their offspring (Hausen 64).[13] This idea was first expressed in its full form in Rousseau's 1762 *Emile: Or, On Education*. In the course of the nineteenth century, the new understanding of the *ideal* mother that evolved from this influential treatise inclined to the Victorian, with the mother nurturing and educating her children in the private sphere—thus the field of a mother's duty was to dedicate herself for their sake. Fathers, on the other hand, were not expected to make any sacrifices for their children, but were to devote their attention as breadwinners of the family to work-related duties. The ideal for adult females of the middle class thus was becoming a wife and mother solely devoted to her husband's and children's needs, guaranteeing "domestic bliss" (Hausen 57).[14] It subsequently developed into a norm for all German women of the middle and lettered classes. By the time the German state was

[12] Bovenschen's original refers to "dem 'natürlichen Beruf'" of women (147), Hausen speaks of the "Geschlechtscharakter" (19).
[13] Hausen' s original reads "standesgemäße Erziehung" (64).
[14] Hausen's original reads "häusliche Glückseeligkeit" (57).

founded in 1870, popular magazines such as *Die Gartenlaube* lauded the ideals of domesticity and female virtue as particular traits of German women across social classes.[15] Along these lines, as elaborated in works by Nancy Reagin and Lora Wildenthal, public discourses presented the mother as essential to nation building. The model of the bourgeois family had achieved symbolic power for society as a whole. It had become the ideal for all families of the Empire.

Concomitantly, however, during the last decades of the nineteenth century the role of women in society became a widely discussed issue across Western industrialized countries, including Germany. Among the theoretical treatises fueling these debates, two works stand out as historically influential and representative of major influences on the era's discussions: Johann Jacob Bachofen's *Mutterrecht* (*Mother Right*, 1861) and *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigenthums und des Staats* (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884) by Friedrich Engels.

Using archaeological data (often disputed today), Bachofen's study on the history of the family as the social institution influencing cultural evolution, investigates prehistoric matrilineal clans, and proposes that these ancient societies placed a high value on mothers as the head of families, mentors, and spiritual guides. According to Bachofen, these cultures were matriarchal in their social structure, and so motherhood constituted the basis for society and morality, crucial not only for children's development, but hunter-gatherers legal, political, and social organization as well.

[15] By 1861, *Die Gartenlaube* was Germany's largest periodical publication and remained the most popular magazine through the end of the century, not only reaching readers across social classes, but fostering a strong sense of unity among the audience (Belgum 2).

With the emergence of male-dominated tribal societies, however, such community-oriented matriarchal structures disappeared, concurrently giving rise to patriarchies. Without essentially challenging the underpinnings of this account, Engels resituated Bachofen's arguments using the logic of political and economic contexts, arguing that with tribal and evolving feudal and technologically driven capitalist systems, the way the family was defined and the rules by which it was governed had fundamentally changed. He posits that evolving practices dictating male lines of inheritance through property rights and monogamous relationships, deprived women of the kinship structures that previously empowered them with the means to participate in economic and political self-determination.

Both Bachofen's and Engels's work influenced Wilhelmine contemporaries to explore the "woman question," and by the turn of the century, this period witnessed the first intimations of movements advocating women's rights, such as suffrage and improved employment, living, and medical conditions. Especially those few women who were socialist politicians, notably Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg, campaigned for gender equality, and their impact continued to be felt in the Weimar Republic, as will be discussed in chapter one. But with only a few such notable exceptions, and the maelstrom of economic and political crises consuming the energies of the short-lived Weimar Republic, the impact of these discourses on the everyday life of German women was minimal and resulted in no lasting impetus for German women's self-determination and control over their lives.

Chris Weedon's study *Gender, Feminism, & Fiction in Germany, 1840-1914*

speaks eloquently to the ways these discussions were taken up and reflected in the period's literature. Therefore I will not reiterate her findings, but rather offer only a brief survey of women's literary representations in major social novels written during the era, namely Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest* (1894), Gabriele Reuter's *Aus guter Familie* (1895), Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901), and Helene Böhlau's *Halbtier!* (1899), all of which attest to public discourses affirming the subjugation of German women, particularly in their role as mothers.[16]

While each of these novels has received scholarly attention in the past for various reasons, the first three works are important for the present study based on their contemporary popularity; the fourth novel, however, has been termed by scholars "the most provocative women's novel of the turn of the century" (Brinker-Gabler 178). The narrative presents not only the most critical literary representation of possible humiliations women might have to endure within their families, but also the most radical form of resistance—murder. Yet as I shall argue, the most important difference between this work and the other three narratives is, that while Fontane, Mann, and Reuter all depict the socially dictated constraints women of their time suffer from, Böhlau is the only author to articulate an alternative: her impossible scenario inverts the possible one. To my knowledge, *Halbtier!* constitutes the sole example of literary works produced before the Weimar period that suggests to its readers a revolutionary solution to women's restricted lives: the combination of motherhood and work for women across all social

[16] For an in-depth discussion on the topic see historian Gordon A Craig's *Theodor Fontane: Literature and History in the Bismarck Reich* that among other works analyses Fontane's *Effi Briest*, not only as testifying to the politics under Bismarck, but generally as the best portrayal of nineteenth-century Germany cultural identity.

classes.

Overall, how these narratives reflect the situation of women in late nineteenth-century Germany reveal one major discrepancy between male and female authors: in the works of Fontane and Mann, the situation of women, in particular those of mothers, functions only as a minor issue embedded deeply in the plots, often seeming only to be a surrogate for interrogating and critiquing traditional values and decision making in view of the changed political and social responsibilities of the new nation's influential men. In contrast, the novels by female authors Reuter and Böhlau, written from a feminist and sometimes leftist point of view, utilize the depiction of women and the figure of the mother in particular as a means to explicitly criticize women's limited options in a male-dominated society. It is critical that none of these writers provide indicators of successful alternatives women could emulate to escape their social restrictions. Arguably, it is no coincidence that Reuter's as well as Böhlau's heroines remain childless, an unspoken rebellion against contemporary social norms for upper and middle classes, which dictated that female options were restricted to marriage and child bearing. Despite such differences in the four works by male and female authors, however, each narrative suggests that the way the expectations and demands of the Wilhelmine patriarchal family limit a woman's choices in life: these writers all share the awareness of limited scripts available to women in this period. Women in marriages have no options except domestic virtue; men have utter control over their wives.

In Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest* (1894), the barely eighteen-year-old Effi is forced into an "advantageous" marriage with a much older man, her mother's former

suitor whose affection for his young wife is expressed by treating her like a child. Consequently, Effi succumbs, in a chance encounter, to seduction by a neighbor. Their brief adulterous relationship is discovered over a decade later by her husband, who as a result of an outdated honor code, insists on a duel with Effi's former lover, killing his rival before disgracing his wife by divorcing her. The latter entails not only Effi's loss of custody and contact with her only child, but also her social downfall, and resultant isolation, culminating in her early death.

In Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901), Tony Buddenbrook is pressured to marry a suitor she despises. Her family considers this "what duty and destiny" (105) require her to do, in order to advance her family's business and position in society. Ironically, the opposite is the case. The decision Tony's father made proves negative, whereas the alternative his daughter proposed appears in retrospect to have been far more advantageous for her, her family, and its business success. Tony's perspicacity exceeds the insights of the male relatives throughout the novel—she understands reliable businessmen make reliable husbands, and that she has been condemned to accepting someone who is neither. From the beginning of Benedix Grünlich's courtship on, Tony realizes—and lets her parents know—that Grünlich only said what her parents "wanted to hear, in order to endear himself" (98) to them. In addition, she remarks that the engagement ring he presented her with was only "gold of inferior quality and very narrow" (145), questioning her suitor's supposedly superb financial circumstances. Instead of marrying the scam artist her husband later turned out to be, the family should have allowed Tony marry the solid, able businessman Morton Schwarzkopf, the man she

loved. This way, she could have been spared two unhappy marriages, two humiliating divorces, and the family could have avoided financial ruin.

By the end of the novel, Tony mourns all her now dead male family members, without whom her life feels "difficult and sad" (758). In doing so, however, she cannot be shown as recognizing their responsibility for the dire circumstances in which she and the remaining female family members are left. Both her father and her brothers made bad decisions in managing Tony's life and the family business. Read from this perspective, the novel presents a critique of the social mores of the day imposed on women, who, consequently, were largely unable to participate in determining the course of their lives, but it offers no solutions or alternatives.

Like these women, Agathe, the main protagonist in Reuter's *Aus guter Familie* (1895), lacks agency over her life, even though she lives in less affluent circumstances than those of Effi Briest and Tony Buddenbrook. Raised a dutiful petit bourgeois daughter, she knows marriage and motherhood await her. However, she fails to attract a suitor who is willing to marry her without a dowry. Unable to find a husband, Agathe is thus constrained by the social dictum of her days to stay with her parents and spend her time with occupations "suitable" for an unmarried girl, such as household chores, needlework, or supporting charities—all under the constant supervision of "adults," a caste to which Agathe, despite her age, will never belong. In the eyes of society, as a single woman, she remains a child. In contrast to her married childhood friends, she enjoys significantly less freedom, explaining why her only wish is to be "all alone" (258), just for once. Yet her wish is not granted, and its suppression ultimately leads to a violent

attack on her privileged and overbearing sister-in-law, after which Agathe is put into a psychiatric clinic. Spending spends several years in the clinic, the novel closes with Agathe "cured" of externalized expression of her emotions. Although she frequently feels sad, "she would hardly know to say, why" (268). Here again, the novel stops at showing the problem, rather than any solution, because there are no alternative scripts in the greater bourgeois public for this situation.

In Helene Böhlau's *Halbtier!* (1899), the protagonist Isolde suffers from gender-based expectations in a different context, providing the reader with a drastic example of what can happen when women are denied control over their lives. In contrast to her brother Karl, Isolde is not allowed to pursue a higher education in order to become a teacher, "despite [the fact that] the family hardly had a fortune" (208). According to her father, the daughter of a "good" family will become a wife and mother—the sole suitable or desirable option. Isolde has one sister, Marie, who fulfills this role, just as her own mother did. She bears child after child, thereby sacrificing herself for her husband and offspring, all the while experiencing ridicule from her husband, replicating her mother's relationship to her father, who verbally abused and degraded his wife throughout their marriage. Isolde, revolts against this option by staying single and becomes an artist. Yet her resistance leads to one catastrophe after another. When her brother-in-law attempts to rape her, Isolde first kills him and, later, herself.

What makes *Halbtier!* unique compared to the other three novels, however, is not only Isolde's violent act of resistance, but also how discursive voices across social classes repeatedly link the situation of women, particularly those of mothers, to a state of

humiliation and exploitation caused by men, a state from which women seemingly cannot escape from. Examples of women's oppression in the novel range from the restricted lives of married, bourgeois women like Isolde's mother to the desperate conditions facing impoverished single female proletarians. With regard to single mothers without financial means, Böhlau particularly criticizes the public options available to indigent mothers for giving birth. Unable to afford a mid-wife for a safer and private homebirth, they were constrained to bear their babies as medical students' study objects. Probed and handled under the then unsanitary conditions of the day, these mothers frequently died as a result.

Böhlau's novelistic messages are remarkable in other aspects, as well. The author is a lone literary voice in advocating a combination of motherhood and work as a means for women's advancement. Her heroine dreams of a society in which women are given both options—work and children. Echoing the matriarchal society advocated by Bachofen and Engels, Böhlau's heroine envisions a world where not only the individual woman independent of her social class could thrive under such circumstances, but that overall a "strong mankind" (299) would result. This assertion reflects the books commitment to what were radical conclusions at the time, breaching the mores of the dominant bourgeois imaginary of the German Empire.

All these novels' plots, each in its own way, reveal the limited prospects of young women restricted to performing under the gender roles established by a bourgeois patriarchal point of view whose symbolic power was "the norm" for the "proper woman" of the day—a norm held in place by showing the catastrophe that awaits a female protagonist failing to adhere to it. In this sense, these works constitute critiques of the

social climate and political conditions during the *Kaiserreich*, yet critiques that are issued in a voice from within bourgeois morality, not from outside it (not socialist, not Bachofen). Heidy Müller's extensive study (1991) of mother-daughter relationships in German prose from 1885 to 1935 reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that daughters represented in Wilhelmine narratives seemingly have no choice, but to suffer or die, due to the negative impact that Germany's patriarchally controlled social structures has on their lives, denying them any form of autonomy and leaving them legally and economically unprotected. Again, it is Helene Böhlau who articulates an overt version of an alternative script, stressing the Darwinian dimension of women's vulnerability: "An animal that was hunted, as the woman is hunted, it would grow something, a horn, a poison fang—the woman grew nothing" (163).

The powerlessness of women reflected in these literary representation of the Wilhelmine era as known to scholars persists in the Weimar Republic, as the female members of society continue to be socialized to become wives and mothers, despite the emergence of more modern public rhetoric to the contrary and the occasional exceptions represented by a handful of influential women in charge of their lives and careers such as Madame Curie, Lou Andrea Salomé, and Anna Freud.

What must be kept in mind, however, is the context of these representations: they are situated in bourgeois households (with more or less money, but all with "proper" dress and social expectations), and most are urban, or closely related to Germany's major urban centers (Berlin, Hamburg). None of them is a single mother, or a farmer's wife, or a factory worker sending money home to her family in a village far away. Wilhelmine

Germany thus saw "the women's question" in largely bourgeois terms, leaving other types of families to outsider politics.[17] World War I explored exceptions to these discourses, but did not facilitate substantive lasting changes in the German social imaginary, as will be evident in the next chapter.

[17] For more details see Peter Gay's series, *The Bourgeois Experience*.

Chapter 1: The Weimar Case—New Woman, Old Mother

Despite changes in public perceptions about rights and social practices after World War I, the narratives about women's roles as mothers found in the Wilhelmine period persist during the Weimar Republic, as the title of this chapter indicates.[1] In this era's most visible literary representations, as I will argue, the female protagonists did not enjoy many of the new social options commonly associated today with the "New Woman"—a nascent feminist movement which ostensibly led to social conditions that enabled lasting positive changes for women or their children.[2] Despite greater freedom for women and increasing entry into wage employment, the female characters actually found in Weimar novels still cannot adequately support themselves and seem hardly conscious of their new rights. As we shall see in the body of this chapter, even a brief survey of widely read Weimar novels illustrates that marriage and family remain the only

[1] Looking at the cultural anxieties shaping postwar France, historian Julian Jackson comes to a similar conclusion in the French context. In his examination of the reaffirmation of women's maternal destiny versus the blurring of traditional gender boundaries during WWI, he thus investigates the question "Old Mother or New Woman?" when it comes to the available roles for women in French society (33-37).

[2] In using the italicized term, I refer to a new type of woman that was primarily defined by her casual clothes, hairstyle, and her self-confident behavior at work and in public life (Frevert 176). Much has been written about these defining characteristics, especially regarding appearance (Ganeva), the entry into wage employment, particularly white collar work, and the search for higher education (Boak). Scholars investigating the changing role of women in society and the relationship between gender and modernity thus frequently point to this icon as symbol for the new self-determination and liberation of German women in the Weimar era (von Ankum, McCormick, Roos). However, some historians argue that, rather than reflecting the norm at the time, this kind of new woman turns out to be rather a projection of men and a distorted picture of female modernity (Frevert 179) as well as a creation of later cultural criticism, especially advertising, rather than referring to a generally familiar type (Frevert 176).

viable options for women during this time, especially for those from the middle class.

The bias toward marriage is represented, for instance, in Lou Andreas-Salomé's *Das Haus* (1921), whose heroine has no control over her own life and suffers from the subordination and self-dissolution that marriage and motherhood entail, turning her husband's house into a "cage" from which she cannot escape. Similarly, Annette Kolb's *Daphne Herbst* (1928) depicts motherhood as women's *raison d'être*. Revolting against society's conventions, her main character dies at the end of this cautionary tale about what will happen if women fail to perform established gender roles. Even Vicki Baum's main protagonist in *Stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* (1928), a university educated chemist and single mother, can only support herself and her child through the intervention of men, and so she ultimately decides to marry in order to devote her energies solely to her son and an aging husband. In contrast, Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi—Eine von uns* (1931) ends with the heroine, friendless and alone, facing her future as a single mother-to-be. In such primary texts, a happy ending awaits only those female protagonists who return to established gender roles as mothers whose husbands can provide for them and their children.

What seems even more disconcerting from today's point of view is that these four novels are the most prominent of the relatively rare representations of women as (working) mothers in literary works dating to the Weimar Republic.[3] This scarcity is all the more striking because the Weimar Republic was supposedly a major site of the newly

[3] The fact that all four authors discussed in this chapter are female does not reflect a conscious choice to focus on narratives by women writers, but rather indicates that women writers at the time focused on the representation of mothers more often and in greater detail than male authors.

liberated woman, and most importantly, the site of the first German democracy's efforts to help women deal with the impact and aftermath of the first World War.

To contextualize the novels depicting available roles for women and related discourses about motherhood in the paradoxes of these interwar years, I will first briefly frame my analyses in the sociopolitical, economic, and legal circumstances conditioning the discourses of motherhood that German women wrote about after World War I.[4] The subsequent sections of this chapter will then return to the four novels first alluded to, in order to expand their representations within this era in new ways.

OVERVIEW OF WEIMAR'S ECONOMIC, SOCIOPOLITICAL, AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Although fathers and sons went to war, consensus among historians exists that German women were not truly emancipated by the first World War. Ute Daniel argues in her feminist historical accounts that German policies encouraging childbearing, together with an expanding welfare state that focused on the family, seem to have overruled the more pragmatic British and French approaches to using women in the war effort. Instead of being encouraged to contribute to that effort agriculturally in units by joining Land Girl harvesters, working in factories, or serving as ambulance drivers on the front,

[4] As Adalgisa Giorgio clarifies, "a text or a group of texts [that condition the discourses on motherhood] cannot be interpreted without reference to a specific literary tradition" as well as "the historical, economic, political, and cultural processes" (*Writing Mothers & Daughters* 6). I therefore follow her example in setting up my chapter by first giving an overview of the economic, sociopolitical, and legal framework, before turning to the interpretation of my chosen literary texts.

German women were urged to stay at home and produce large families.[5]

With the beginning of WWI, when male family members began to serve at the front, their roles within the family were often necessarily supplanted by older daughters, mothers, or wives, who had to become the heads of a household, as historians document.[6] Particularly working-class families' income often drastically decreased, because of the men's missing income. Wartime supplementary payments to soldier's families fell far short of their survival needs (Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen* 29). Thus, now even women with children who previously had not worked outside the home or the family farm tried to take on outside gainful employment to supplement the family income (Frevert 155). In this way, working women relocated from scarcely or totally unremunerated "invisible" female employment on farms and in households to "visible" occupations with salaries in jobs often formerly held by men, including factory workers (Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen* 35). Hence, while this change struck contemporaries as significant (Frevert 156-57), the actual number of employed women did not increase at a disproportionately high rate during the war years (Frevert 156-57).

Still, due to their limited financial resources, in combination with unequal pay and increasing inflation, hardships on German women and their children grew in the WWI era and made survival the priority of even the New Woman. They, like their married sisters, mothers, and aunts, faced extreme shortages of housing, medicine, clothes, and food during and after the war, particularly after the allies' economic blockade prevented the

[5] The findings of historian Ute Frevert second this, revealing that the first major campaign encouraging German women to take jobs in essential industries, thus allowing men to go to the front, was actually not launched before 1917 (155).

[6] See for instance Frevert 153-55 and Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen* 27.

import of food and raw materials, like the chemicals, coal, ore, wood, and cotton Germany depended on (Davis 22-23). As a result, mothers often suffered from weakened immune systems due to inadequate diets, poor living conditions, and extreme exhaustion due to working long hours under horrible conditions (Daniel, *Der Krieg* 135). In addition to managing their households and finding food, these women were consequently prone to diseases like tuberculosis and pneumonia (Davis 184). Like their mothers, many proletarian children suffered from malnourishment often connected to a lack of fat intake,[7] life-threatening diseases, or the lack of a sufficiently warm environment (Davis 186).

Compounding these problems in the war's aftermath: one-third of the 1.7 million German soldiers who died on the battlefields were married, leaving behind more than half a million widows (Bessel 129), 80% of whom had underage children (Hausen 334). The pension paid to these widows of soldiers, however, barely exceeded the poverty line (Hausen 331), providing only minimal relief to the hardships these women experienced. Due to the societal disruptions caused by the war, the numbers of orphans also increased. Before WWI, Germany had an estimated 700,000 orphans (Berghahn 147). However, these numbers almost doubled by 1923, when the *Reichsarbeitsministerium* estimated the number of children without parents at 1.2 million (Whalen 95). Hence, the end of the war did not change the predominantly poor and often desperate situation of women with children.

By the same token, husbands returning from the battlefields often faced

[7]See especially Davis's chapter on the "Battles over Butter," 76-92.

unemployment, compounding the other stresses they experienced in adjusting to civilian life under drastically altered circumstances. During their absences, their roles within the family were often necessarily supplanted by older daughters, mothers, or wives, who often had to become the heads of a household and work for food as the family's employed breadwinners. The reintegration of men into family structures thus proved difficult, and divorce rates tripled after WWI (Frevert 193).

Then as now, reasons for divorce varied. But one factor widely recognized today was attributable to the return of soldiers not as heroes from the battlefields after four years absence, but as emotionally crippled and estranged men suffering from disillusionment and traumatic experiences (Kundrus 159). In contrast to imagery in literature such as Ernst Jünger's *Marmorklippen*, glorifying soldiers' war experiences, a great number of these men felt "disillusioned, defeated, and bitter" after the war (Koonz 24). The very young soldiers who had enthusiastically set out to fight for their fatherland in order to prove their masculinity often faced identity crises in their attempts to readapt to forms of civilian life they had never experienced as adults. In the limited understanding they had been given about the war and their identities as German citizens, these soldiers' masculinity had been tied primarily to myths of heroism. After years in the trenches, their definition of manhood no longer included a man's role as that of a patient, supportive father—the new nation at war had not provided prototypes for male identities as husbands and fathers.[8] These factors often contributed to irreconcilable problems in

[8] Consequently, historian Birthe Kundrus notes, the homecoming German men had not only "been stripped of their role as provider and father, but wartime conditions and the defeat had called into question their status as soldiers as protectors of the home and fatherland" (159).

marriage or prevented new relationships from forming.

In his research, Klaus Theweleit's book *Male Fantasies* (1977, translated 1987) explores the representations of WWI soldiers' mental constructs in ways that can be illuminating here. In his work on *Freikorps* narratives of former WWI soldiers, Theweleit identifies a particular typology of women these men created for themselves during WWI to help them understand their environment and their own roles as "proper" males, notably exclusively through images of how they were to relate to a mother, a sister, or a nurse (Theweleit 1:90-123). In contrast, erotic fantasies about wives and girlfriends appear to be largely absent (Theweleit 2, 348). Evidence of soldiers relating to marriage and raising a family were so underdeveloped in these men post-WWI (Theweleit 1: 3-18, 124) that Theweleit does not even mention them in his conclusion about male identities. Arguably, then, these primarily very young soldiers had few if any images of women as peers and partners with whom they might raise children—they had little idea of what troubles women had faced.

Yet despite society's disrupted patriarchal heritage that Theweleit shows us, it was not the men who returned after years of absence from their families, but rather the working wives and mothers who were charged in the public discourses of this postwar era with being the agents responsible for *Familienverwahrlosung,* the disintegration of family structures. After the war, these women, especially the middle-class ones, were subject to prejudice and negative clichés. According to historian Ute Daniel, contemporary media characterized the working *Kriegerfrauen* with children as neglecting their offspring, cheating on their soldier husbands, having extravagant wishes, as well as

appearing to be too ambitious, and most of all too critical (*Arbeiterfrauen* 272). It is important to note here that the negative depiction and attitude toward working mothers for the first time shifted from working-class to middle-class women during this time period,[9] but, as we shall see, this trend prevails. In addition, the combination of the adjective "ambitious" with the verb "to neglect" frequently reoccurs in characterizations of employed mothers in the German context ever since this point in time. During demobilization, these women were thus the first to be dismissed from work in favor of returning men, regardless of their on-the-job performance and economic situation (Frevert 197). This measure was justified as helping to prevent women from further neglecting their motherly duties, which had, according to the male-dominated press and public fora, created a purportedly unwelcome liberalization of the family and society as a whole.

Such charges were also raised against the growing number of young single women striving for independence in ways commonly associated with the term New Woman (Usborne, "New Woman" 155): primarily, their entry into wage employment, particularly in offices, and their quest for higher education (regardless of the fact that such choices may have actually been the result of losing fiancés and husbands in the

[9] While working-class mothers had already been described with negative attributes, as I documented in the introduction, employed middle-class women now became a target of unfavorable characterizations as well. Although often forced to pursue employment because of monetary needs, these women were accused of neglecting their children so that they could afford luxury items. These charges raised against middle-class women ignored the historical realities confronting working-class women, the majority of women in the German workforce at that time.

war).[10] One of the dominant discourses characterizing this New Woman of the Weimar Republic thus charged her with irresponsibility vis-à-vis the state and the public. In the public and private discourses of many contemporaries, in attempting to become intellectually and financially independent, these women were thought to be guilty of avoiding social responsibility. With social responsibility defined in the public mind as requiring marriage and childrearing, unmarried women were castigated as selfishly supporting themselves through education and a career, and accused of having abandoned motherhood (Usborne, "New Woman" 137). Rather than blaming the social and economic framework for decreasing birthrates, it was these women who were seen as putting the family and the state into a state of crisis by spurning "matrimony for reasons of self-interest and personal pleasure" (Usborne, "New Woman" 147). Instead of fulfilling their primary "social duty of motherhood," then, these women were seen as corrupted, solely "guided by fashion, mass media and consumerism" (Usborne, "New Woman" 147).

State authorities had already voiced their anxiety about Germany's inadequate population growth before and during the war (Frevert 159), but subsequently the combined impact of fewer new marriages, increased divorce rates, and women choosing a career over motherhood were widely seen as key factors contributing to Germany's birthrate "declining at a faster rate than any other Western country" (Usborne, "New

[10] While the overall percentage of employed women did not increase compared to 1907, women workers moved from the agricultural sector to the industrial, manufacturing, and service sector (Frevert 177). By 1925 there were almost 1.5 million female white-collar workers in Germany, three times as many compared to 1907 (Frevert 177). Likewise the number of female university students spiraled, reaching 16% of all students in 1931 (Frevert 197).

Woman" 154). In a political effort to secure "the preservation and growth of the nation" the Weimar constitution's article §119 strove to strengthen marriage and family as institutions vital for the survival of the state.[11] Based on paragraph §119, clauses (2) and (3) of the constitution, the state and its municipalities introduced new welfare initiatives,[12] and financial aid for families with many children became a top priority after the war (Heinemann 52).

Ironically, despite the fact, that, for the first time in German history, the constitution recognized equal civic rights for men and women in its paragraph §109 and granted gender equality in marriage, the patriarchal family laws of the German Civil Code, were not revised (Frevert 185). For historian Ute Frevert, this omission can be attributed to the fact that no political party made women's rights a priority for their political agenda (170). While women enthusiastically took advantage of their newly gained right to vote (169), the majority of the few female parliamentarians—fewer than 10% of all elected members of the Reichstag (169)—were excluded from high-level positions of influence (171). Largely representing the bourgeois women's movement, these female politicians also voluntarily left domains such as economic and fiscal policy alone, which, however, was one of women's most pressing concerns after the war (169-70). Instead, the female delegates, like their male counterparts, concentrated on "policies

[11]Article 119 (1) Weimarer Reichsverfassung: "Die Ehe steht als Grundlage des Familienlebens und der Erhaltung und Vermehrung der Nation unter dem besonderen Schutz der Verfassung. Sie beruht auf der Gleichberechtigung der beiden Geschlechter."

[12] Article 119 (2) Weimarer Reichsverfassung: "Die Reinerhaltung, Gesundung und soziale Förderung der Familie ist Aufgabe des Staates und der Gemeinden. Kinderreiche Familien haben Anspruch auf ausgleichende Fürsorge."

Article 119 (3) Weimarer Reichsverfassung: "Die Mutterschaft hat Anspruch auf den Schutz und die Fürsorge des Staates."

that would preserve and stabilize the family" (170). Hence, politics only partially advanced women's interests and overall situation.

Contraception was still restricted to small, relatively expensive private initiatives, with counseling centers primarily located in large cities like Berlin or Hamburg (Frevert 189). Frevert points out that in the 1920s and early 1930s a great many women still had only a "limited knowledge about conception and contraception" (186), and especially for the lower socioeconomic class, safe, affordable contraceptives were largely unavailable (187).[13] Moreover, as historian Atina Grossmann asserts, paragraph §184.3 of the civil law code restricted the "advertising, display, and publicizing of contraceptives" (90). Thus the number of unwanted pregnancies among women of all classes was high and abortion often the only answer. A clinic in Berlin stated that 78.7 % of all pregnancies they confirmed would later end in illegal abortions (90). Based on data gained through court documents, an estimated one million abortions had been performed in 1931 alone (Frevert 187). Especially single working women chose abortion over having children. Earning twenty to forty percent less than men, women were hardly able to support themselves, let alone an additional child (Frevert184). Therefore, annual averages of only 150,000 illegitimate children were born in the 1920s (Frevert 198), underscoring that the vast majority of unwanted pregnancies ended in abortion. As my analysis of this era's discourses in novels about motherhood will document, the economic, sociopolitical, and legal parameters in the aftermath of World War I effectively precluded any

[13] Frevert points out that the bourgeoisie in contrast practiced contraception more frequently, leading to the emergence of two-child nuclear family, which become the norm in the 1930s for this social class (186).

representations of emancipated German mothers, in either working- or middle-class contexts.

Before turning to an analysis of the texts themselves, I will outline in the next section the novels' shared representations of Weimar society's economic and structural field and the discursive space available to them, which equally influenced representations of motherhood in the Weimar Republic.

Structural and Discursive Realities for Women's Lives in Weimar

Bourdieu's concepts of a structural field and a discursive space help to clarify how the novels are projected into their surroundings. The field shared by all four novels is defined here biographically and historically. I will contextualize these fields by presenting each author's biography, statements about their work, the accounts of others regarding their work, the conditions of publication, and a short plot summary of each novel.[14] Against this backdrop I will highlight the writers' shared themes as they take up the era's master discourses, and then will turn to a more detailed literary as well as linguistic analysis of the individual narratives, illuminating the texts' representations of available roles for women and dominant discourses on motherhood.

The first author in question was a Weimar bestseller, even though she was not German. Vicki Baum (1888-1960) grew up as the only child in a bourgeois Jewish family

[14] I follow here the model historian Lisa Silverman utilizes in her book *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars*, in which she discusses the position of Jewish authors (including Baum) within the structural field of literary production.

in the cosmopolitan fin-de-siècle Vienna and spent her formative years there. While her father suffered from hypochondria, her mother was a neurotic and hysteric, attempting suicide multiple times. In her autobiography *Es war alles ganz ande*rs: *Erinnerungen* (1962), published two years after the author's death, Baum describes primarily being raised by a nanny who was a former midwife, expelled from her profession for performing illegal abortions, who often told the young girl frightening stories about bloody births, stillborn children, and abortions (41). Such tales were widely disseminated in the era as warnings against female sexuality, and Baum would use them regularly in her own writings.

Another layer of discourse runs through her story: economic self-sufficiency. Baum's mother returned—supposedly healed—from the psychiatric clinic she was treated during Baum's teenage years and urged her daughter to become a harpist, a suitable profession for a bourgeois girl, in order to secure her independence from men (149-50). Good harpists were well paid and were the only female orchestra members tolerated in a primarily male-dominated sphere. As Baum states, as a professional musician with the Wiener Konzertverein, she could support herself, which in turn meant that she was free to marry whom she wanted to (150). In Baum's case, this was Max Prels, a bohemian writer. Finances drove the next major event in their union. Prels had a contract for six short stories with the German publisher Velhagen & Klasings, but could not deliver, hence the couple was about to face financial ruin. Stepping in, Baum wrote the stories for her husband, and they were published under his name (249-51).

The next phase of Baum's life brings class into the picture. Shortly after that first writing success, Baum filed for divorce and moved to Germany, where she continued to work as a harpist and met Opera director Richard Lert, who became her second husband. Here, she assumed a distinctly stereotypical class-bound lifestyle. Lert did not want his wife to work in an orchestra anymore, and so Baum gave up her career as musician and instead began to write—she even won an essay contest judged by Thomas Mann. While such writing was an artistic niveau that was not entirely objectionable by contemporary standards, it was not a viable source of income. However, in 1918 Lert temporarily lost his job and the family income (325), leaving Baum once again in need of money, and so Baum broke with such more acceptable forms of bourgeois literature, and supported her family by writing what she could sell (338). Max Prels, who had remained Baum's friend after their divorce, had introduced her to the Jewish publisher Ullstein (324). Ullstein hired Baum as a columnist for his magazines *Die Berliner Illustrirte*, *Die Dame*, and *UHU*, a job that led to Baum's career as prolific and bestselling author of works like *Menschen im Hotel* (1929) and *Stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* (1928). As historian Lisa Silverman illustrates, Baum's professional career as a successful writer would probably not have been possible without the support of men (94), something the author's biography shares with her character Helene.

Baum's *Helene Willfüer* reflects the core historical issues of the Weimar Republic. Women generally were beginning to realize that, married or not, they might well need to be self-supporting in an urban environment. Even bourgeois girls began in some families to be prepared for more than marriage—a shift in practice that was radical

in bourgeois circles. The caveat was that there were a distinct set of occupations that women could take up, with the fine arts high among them—but not anything too commercial or unladylike. Finally, divorce was possible in the event of complete failure by the man, but women were expected to embrace roles as wives and mothers under all other circumstances. The stereotypes for female behavior were thus very fixed in Baum's life and class position; that awareness reflected in her arguably most famous novel.

In *stud. chem. Helene Willfüer*, the title character is a female student of chemistry without family support, who, while working toward her doctoral degree discovers that she is pregnant. Unable to pay for a safe but illegal abortion, she and the father of her unborn child, the medical student Rainer, plan a double suicide. While Helene changes her mind, Rainer actually kills himself, and Helene gets arrested for his murder shortly thereafter. This melodramatic opening clearly has its roots in female reality at the time, commenting as it does on the availability of birth control, the difficulties of women with no traditional family ties, and the instability of younger males like Rainer who had served in the first World War. And just as the Weimar state blamed women for broken homes, so, too, is Helene presumed guilty of his death. Even when she is exonerated, society will not forgive her.

Although found not guilty and released from prison, the resulting scandal requires that Helene leave Heidelberg and continue her studies in Munich. There she finishes her dissertation and gives birth to a baby boy, yet is unable to find employment, in no small part because of her irregular situation. Only through the help of male friends can she survive and keep her child. With such assistance Helene's life changes for the better, but

despite having realized her ambition to become a successful woman chemist, the novel closes with her choosing to marry the now divorced Professor Ambrosius and give up her career

Baum's account about the difficulties she faced in having her book published suggest ways that contemporaneous stereotypes for women were indeed in play: "good" middle-class girls did not engage in premarital sex and become pregnant—that supposedly happened only to working-class women. Moreover, few women focused on their career after giving birth. From today's vantage point *Helene Willfüer* can be read as a romance novel and seems to have fit Ullstein's portfolio of easy-to-read fiction. Yet "shameless, piggish sensationalism" (Baum, "Es war alles ganz anders" 365)—that was the publisher's first comment upon reading Baum's novel.[15] Hermann Ullstein, the youngest of the four Ullstein brothers who owned the publishing house with the same name (King 153), had wanted Baum to write a traditional love story centering on the Weimar era's new prototype of a young working woman, such as a secretary or typist, "a diligent girl" (Baum, "Es war alles ganz anders" 364).[16] Baum's story, featuring a female chemistry student, struggling with the implications of an unwanted pregnancy, constantly having to prove herself in a male-dominated working environment, was not what Ullstein had in mind. Yet the writer explains in her autobiography *Es war alles ganz anders* that, for her, nothing exemplified diligence better than this "absolute decent story of a female student, who becomes pregnant, attempts an abortion and suicide, and finally elevates

[15] "eine schamlose, schweinische Sensationsmache" (365).
[16] "ein tüchtiges Mädel" (364).

herself from her misery and struggles through" (364-65).[17] In addition, she wanted to create a character "who wanted to be someone" (364). Nevertheless, considered too provocative and immoral regarding the narrative's portrayal of premarital sex and abortion, Baum states, the manuscript was put on ice for several years (365).

Instead of a book edition, *Helene* was later published as a serialized novel 1928 in Ullstein's widely read magazine *Die Berliner Illustrirte*, a media outlet that was known for its overt left-liberal views and support of progressive causes (King 159). Based on a circulation exceeding two million during the run of the novel (157), reaching readers in Berlin as well as in the provinces (160), Lynda J. King claims that "people from all professions and classes had read the novel," that reviewers praised for its sympathetic depiction of women's issues, and that they called it a "much needed positive model for women" (157). The liberal press and its critics thus were less censorious than Hermann Ullstein had been initially.

A proven success, the novel was then published in book form the same year, a common practice for Ullstein.[18] The first printing of the book was 55,000 copies, by 1932 this number increased to a total of 105,000 (Vogt-Praclik 90). To put this popularity into perspective: the first edition of Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* had only 50,000 copies and within 3 years after publication it still lagged behind Baum's *Stud. chem. Helene*

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[17] "war es die durchaus anständige Geschichte einer Studentin, die schwanger wird, einen Abtreibungs- und einen Selbstmordversuch macht, sich schließlich über ihre Nöte erhebt und sich durchkämpft" (364-65).

[18] The publisher would often print a work as serialized novel in one of their magazines first, for instance in *Die Berliner Illustrirte* or *UHU*, and then later in book form, once the material proofed to be a success with a broad readership. Other examples are, for instance, Baum's *Menschen im Hotel*, *Zwischenfall in Lohwinckel* or *Das Leben ohne Geheimnis*. See King, *Best-sellers by Design* 118.

Willfüer in copies sold (Vogt-Praclik 34). Likewise, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* by Alfred Döblin had a first edition that sold approximately 40,000 copies in its first year (Vogt-Praclik 39). In short, although these works today belong to the established literary canon, Baum's bestseller was more widely purchased at the time, in no small part to the innovative marketing strategies employed by the publishing house, such as advertisements in the publisher's own magazines and newspapers. Nevertheless, as King argues, Baum's success was also the result of a deliberate long-range marketing plan by Ullstein that, in particular, aimed to build up Baum's image as a prototypical New Woman in terms of her looks, while still holding up traditional ideals and values. This prescribed mix of modernity and tradition in the figure of the author—and her character Helene—was intended to attract a female middle-class readership, who on the one hand, wanted to be progressive, yet on the other hand could not break with established gender conventions.[19]

Critics have noted that the novel's far-reaching reception was thus important politically, as well, because more people read *Helene* than they did "most of the 'serious' works addressing abortion or other 'women's issues'" (King 160). No other contemporary novel thematizing the role of women in society had the same potential influence on such a broad readership. For that reason, this work can easily serve as the centerpiece novel for any discussion of Weimar Germany's discourses on women as mothers, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

[19] For a more detailed discussion of the relation between author, character, reader, and publishing success, see King, *Best-sellers by Design*, ch. 4. See also Rützou Petersen, *Women and Modernity* 4-5.

Consequently, comparing the situation of Baum's novel to some of the very few peer novels about mothers that existed in the era will help illustrate the range of options found in narratives that also address the German mother's place in society.

MOVING BEYOND THE BOURGEOISIE

The other three novels that will be treated in more depth in the next chapter are by authors who are placed quite differently in society than was Vicki Baum. Annette Kolb (1870-1967), Lou Andreas-Salomé (1861-1937), and Irmgard Keun (1905-1982) each come from backgrounds that differ considerably from the Jewish Austrian Vicki Baum, but their novels were written for audiences similar to those that Baum wrote for.[20]

The first of the other authors who will help to characterize the representations of Weimar's structural realities and the discourses managing them writes from a position at the lower edge of the upper classes. Born 1870 in Munich as one of six children to Max Kolb (the illegitimate son of King Maximilian II of Bavaria) and the French pianist Sophie Danvin, the mediation between the two cultures became one of Annette Kolb's major interests early on.[21] Yet the politically engaged Kolb was also an engaged social

[20] The implied reader Ullstein aimed to target with his books were primarily middle-class women who could afford to buy and read books. According to Nicole Nottelmann, the storyline of these narratives thus had to be acceptable for a mainstream audience, especially with regards to providing conventional endings (.128-30). As we shall see after the plot analysis of all four novels, Keun, Kolb, and Andreas-Salomé thus fall into the same category in terms of readership.

[21] The author, who lived in exile during WWI and the Third Reich, remains primarily known for her various efforts to reconcile Germany and France, earning her the Großes Verdienstkreuz der Bundsrepublik Deutschland in 1959 (Strohmeyr 326).

moralist, who also addressed other social issues unflinchingly and without regard for the issue of the popular appeal in her works, as literary scholar Hiltrud Häntzschel remarks.[22]

For this reason, Kolb repeatedly articulated the needs of women in a male-dominated world that restricts them (Strohmeyr 85) and was quite overt in her critique of women's role in Weimar society. However, Kolb's novels are stylistically sophisticated and "the plot becomes a parable" (Marlo Werner 140). In contrast to Vicki Baum, who wrote books for a mass audience that were consequently intended to be entertaining and easy to read (Baum, *Es war alles ganz anders* 499), Kolb wrote for a seemingly different audience with more sophisticated tastes, yet still within the romance genre. According to Kolb's biographer Armin Strohmeyr, neither her first novel *Das Exemplar* (1913), nor her second novel *Daphne Herbst* (1928), although both critically acclaimed,[23] sold well (81). Between 1928 and 1982 only 32,000 copies of *Daphne Herbst* were printed by the S. Fischer publishing house,[24] fewer than *Helene Willfüer*'s first printing.

Still, the two narratives share a significant commonality: both novels present women ultimately defined by their nurturing qualities. After the tragic death of her mother Helga, Daphne Herbst, the main protagonist in Kolb's novel, feels obliged to take over her mother's role as caretaker of the family and moves with her father from Paris to Munich. Embedded in the portrayal of the decadence and the decay of Munich's

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[22] See Hiltrud Häntzschel,"Kolb, Annette."

[23] *Das Examplar* won the prestigious Fontane award in 1913 and was praised for its stylistic features by fellow writers like Rainer Maria Rilke and Hugo von Hofmannathal (Strohmeyer 81). The latter also applauded Kolb on her later novel *Daphne Herbst*, for him "a modern novel" (Strohmeyer 163).

[24] See publication data available online via the German National Library website <https://portal.dnb.de/opac.htm?method=showNextResultSite&currentResultId=%22118713698%22+sortBy+jhr%2Fsort.ascending%26any%26books&currentPosition=60>.

aristocracy shortly before the first World War, the story unfolds through a series of catastrophic events, set in motion by the family's youngest daughter, the naïve Flick, the sheltered child of the upper classes. First, her honor is put into question, and her brother Franz has to pay with his life in a duel to save it. Then, the shock over yet another beloved family member's death causes Daphne's chronic throat disease to worsen. Flick, however, misjudging the seriousness of her sister's condition, prevents Daphne from getting the care she needs. Although Daphne finally escapes her sister's "care" with the help of her secret fiancé Cary, a man her father dislikes because of his different faith, Daphne cannot be saved. The young woman dies on her honeymoon. Her father, having lost a mothering daughter quickly finds yet another woman to take care of him. This story thus plays in a milieu where daughters are utterly expendable except when they are maternal caretakers or potential brides making a favorable liaison. They have the moral force to act in exemplary fashion, but they are not expected to contribute compensated work to the family. The resolution of the plot even suggests that women are readily replaceable as caretakers.

This theme of women having to care for men also emerges in the works of Lou Andreas-Salomé, another author born at the boundaries of the upper and middle classes—but in Russia. As the last of six children and only girl, Louise von Salomé was born 1861 in St. Petersburg, Russia. Her father was a famous general in the imperial army, and, despite his Huguenot ancestry, was part of Russia's aristocracy (Koepcke 19). He was well connected to the Tsar, who even allowed him to found St. Petersburg's Protestant Reformed church (Koepcke 20). Lou's mother, on the other hand, was of German

bourgeois origin (Koepcke 18-19). Growing up with a heritage, language, and religion different from her Russian environment shaped von Salomé and contributed to her becoming an independent individual. In 1880 she left St. Petersburg for Zurich, in order to study religion and philosophy (Koepcke 48),[25] interests reflected to a high degree in her later work (Koepcke 152).

Shortly after the move to Switzerland, however, the young woman got seriously ill. In search of a milder climate to recuperate, she traveled with her mother to Italy, where she first encountered Paul Rée and Friedrich Nietzsche, who subsequently became some of her closest friends; both wanted to marry her (Koepcke 78). Yet the intellectual rebelled against traditional marriage and opposed having children (Koepcke 237). Thus, although she eventually married the orientalist Friedrich Carl Andreas in 1887, their relationship apparently remained celibate (Koepcke 131), a sign for her that love can be experienced independent from sexuality.[26] Although frequently labeled a feminist, Andreas-Salomé did not associate herself directly with the women's movement. Yet her literary and analytical works center on the social and psychological problems of women as individuals,[27] and, much like Annette Kolb, Lou Andreas-Salomé describes in her novels "a sense of impotence"[28] as literary critic Hilke Veth points out (457). This theme

[25] Andreas-Salomé chose to study in Switzerland, because at the time it was the only German-speaking country without any restrictions in terms of women enrolling in degree programs (Koepcke 44).
[26] Although Andreas-Salomé never maintained sexual relations with the majority of her suitors, including her husband, her relationship with Rainer Maria Rilke was an exception to this rule (Koepcke 244).
[27] Famous examples thereof are, for instance, the narrative *Fénitschka* (1898) and the theoretical work *Der Mensch als Weib* (1899). Moreover, after Andreas-Salomé meets Freud in 1911, she subsequently approaches questions of female sexuality as a psychoanalyst in her early fifties (Koepcke 289-97).
[28] The German original calls it "Ohnmachtsgefühle des Subjekts" (Veth 457).

occurs particularly in conjunction with marriage, especially in her novel *Das Haus: Familiengeschichte vom Ende vorigen Jahrhunderts* (1921).[29]

Andreas-Salomé offers a more nuanced picture of the psychological sides of the typical Weimar gender constellation in families than her peers. Her novel, situated in imperial Germany at the turn of the century, features an authoritarian father figure, Frank Branhardt, who stands at the center of Andreas-Salomé's story about two generations of women torn between submission and self-assertion in marriage—a narrative device that underscores the continuity between the era of unification and the Weimar period. Yet the character of Anneliese, Frank's wife and the mother of his children Gitta and Balduin, articulates the consciousness of a 1920s New Woman. She is the one who stands up for and protects Gitta, who, unable to come to terms with the reality of a married woman's life, runs away from her husband a few weeks after her marriage proved to be so different from the girl's romantic expectations. In doing so, Anneliese does not silently accept all her husband's demands, but speaks out against them. Wilhelmine women, however, had no model for such acts of rebellion. The mother's narrative voice thus reflects Andreas-Salomé's own forceful point of view on gender equality within marital relationships. This act of resistance to patriarchal power, however, causes underlying conflicts in Anneliese's own marriage to evolve. By the end of novel, both Anneliese and Gitta realize that they cannot exist without their husbands' love, and thus, seemingly happy, return to their roles as wives and mothers.

[29] In fact, the title was originally supposed to be "Marriage" ("Ehe") (Koepcke 242).

Regardless of an ending that affirms traditional marriage, the book was not a popular read, probably because of its critique of female roles. In addition, Andreas-Salomé, who published the majority of her writing with the publisher Cotta, usually wrote for an intellectual audience. Apparently Ullstein selected her for a series of "theoretical and fictional works by women on women" (Cormican 127) to target a large female readership, but *Das Haus* did not sell well and attracted only few of the publisher's usual clientele looking for an easy read.[30] What her text offers us nonetheless is confirmation of the expectations and trials of middle-class wives and mothers who were expected to manage the emotional problems of partners in their marriages, and perhaps also the suggestion that Weimar was not as liberal outside Berlin itself as it purported to be.

Unlike Andreas-Salomé, Irmgard Keun, the last author to be discussed in this chapter, captured a large readership with her works. Born in 1905 to liberal, lower middle-class parents, the author spent her formative years in Cologne where she attended a protestant school for girls (Marchlewitz 17-19). After graduation, Keun continued her education at a trade school, preparing the young woman for her later position as a typist. Yet like many of her peers, she dreamed of a career as actress. From 1927 to 1929 she played minor parts in stage productions, first in Hamburg and then in Greifswald (Marchlewitz 24) but thereafter began writing and in 1931 traveled to Berlin in search of a publisher for her first novel. The Universitas publishing house immediately showed

[30] Unlike the other works I discuss in this chapter, Andreas- Salomé's novel has not been reprinted at all between 1927 and 1987, a further indicator of its lack of popularity.

interested in *Gilgi—Eine von uns* (1931) and first published the work in book form, later also as a serialized novel (26). This novel explores expectations of women questioning middle-class behavioral norms for women who initially experiment with rejection of those norms and in the process discover their own values. Hence, like *Helene Willfüer*, Keun's *Gilgi* presents a character who in the end "does the right thing."

Initially in her first person narrative, Gilgi describes the foibles of her stable job as a typist, an occupation that she, over the course of the novel, dislikes more and more. When she meets the older bohemian writer Martin, she gives up that job and her independent lifestyle to devote her time entirely to him. As the story unfolds, Gilgi discovers she is expecting a child. Hence, similar to Vicki Baum's *Helene Willfüer*, *Gilgi* presents its main protagonist as a single woman struggling with the implications of an unwanted pregnancy. Although first thinking of abortion, Gilgi decides to keep her child, but to leave the irresponsible Martin. The novel thus closes with the mother-to-be boarding a train to Berlin, where she hopes to be able to find work and raise her child as a single mother.

The direct references here to Weimar are indisputable. Feminist scholars often view the novel as written to mobilize readers into taking issue with contemporary politics (Barndt 72). Keun's book was published at the height of demonstrations against paragraph §218 that criminalized abortion (Frevert 187), and it sold more than 30,000 copies during its first year of publication (Marchlewitz 26). From August to October 1932, right before the November 1932 elections, Keun's work also appeared as a serialized novel in the Social Democratic Party's daily newspaper *Vorwärts* (Marchlewitz

26), probably in an attempt to address potential female voters, especially white-collar secretaries and shop girls (Barndt 84). In contrast to bourgeois and denominational parties that were adamant about keeping the anti-abortion law, the Communist and Social Democratic parties campaigned for its annulment (Frevert 187). Thus although Keun did not endorse any specific political message with her narrative (Barndt 84), *Gilgi—eine von uns*, nevertheless reflected public discussions across the entire political spectrum and as such had a "powerful impact on contemporary readers" (von Ankum 172). Hence, the novel has recently received attention from scholars investigating aspects of motherhood and sexuality during the Weimar Republic.[31]

WEIMAR'S DISCOURSES ON MOTHERS: THE IMPROBABILITY OF BREAKING FREE

Although Andreas-Salomé, Baum, Keun, and Kolb came from diverse backgrounds regarding their education, financial situation, religion, and to some degree also class (from both ends of the "middle" class)—they all address the issue of females socialized to be wives and mothers in a time when women increasingly demanded to be recognized as independent individuals, as they themselves did.

Reoccurring themes in their novels reflect discourses about the place of women in the working world of Germany's 1920s, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, and the hardships of both married and single motherhood. In doing so, the authors portray the plight of women from different perspectives and historical eras, utilizing diverging

[31] Examples are, for instance, the works of von Ankum and Barndt.

narrative strategies and stylistic features. If read as statements about the roles of women and their options in German society, however, a significant commonality emerges: all four narratives depict particularly middle-class women trapped in the narrow nurturing role society assigns them because they lack viable alternatives. The options for women in Germany of the 1920s seemingly remained circumscribed by the expectations and social practices regarding women's role in the marriages of the Wilhelmine era. Hence, all these works reflect on the Weimar era's central discourses about what a woman can and cannot do in their respective sociohistorical contexts.

Written by bourgeois authors for an intended middle-class readership[32] who could afford to read books, both in terms of finances and time, these four narratives share discourses reflecting middle-class biases on women's choices during the Weimar period. While proletarian as well as upper-class voices speak in these narratives, they do so only at the margins, and they are rarely authorized to so. When they do speak, however, the authors mark their speech by using a register or dialect that differs from that used by the novels' heroines.[33] Furthermore, these minor characters, especially when they are mothers, invariably display characteristics that contrast their appearance or behavior with that of middle-class mothers. In a polarizing strategy of positive self-representation and

[32] That the intended readership was indeed middle-class women is also substantiated in particular when looking at where the novels were advertised. To promote Baum's *Helene*, for instance, Ullstein used its magazine *UHU*, a publication that geared toward middle-class women, not *Die Dame*, which targeted an upper-class audience (Silverman,96).

[33] In Kolb's novel, the upper class speaks a mixture of High German and French, the servants speak in the Bavarian dialect; Keun's upper class speaks High German, the working-class speaks in the Cologne dialect; Baum's upper class speaks High German, working-class protagonists speak various dialects, depending on the setting (Heidelberg, Frankfurt, Munich); Andreas-Salomé's novel, however, is the most drastic: it offers no opportunities for direct speech for the lower classes. References in the text suggest that the dialect of a fisherman's wife and mother of a young boy is supposedly so strongly divergent from the norm that the main characters can communicate with her only using sign language.

negative representation of the Other (van Dijk 197), Andreas-Salomé, Baum, Kolb, and Keun describe working-class mothers with the adjectives *exhausted, sick, dirty, poor*, and *uneducated*; the upper-class ones, on the other hand, are described as *fashionable, elegant, arrogant,* and *coldhearted*. Moreover, women of lower socioeconomic classes frequently have abortions or give up their unwanted children. In contrast, the "good" middle-class girls with whom the reader of that time could be presumed to identify will bear their children despite dire circumstances and are thus described as *brave* and *courageous*.

Therefore, a close examination reveals that all these novels' linguistic interactions bear the traces of the social presuppositions of their periods. In this regard the novels' representations communicate two important messages: first, the various discourses related to the liberated women of the Weimar era seem to be of particular interest to a middle-class readership; second, as agents in the field of literary production, the authors acknowledge and recreate the prevailing opinion of the book-buying public. For middle-class women of the Weimar period, the only option is to become a mother.

Thus the representations of mothers in these texts contain realistic elements (such as reflections of the laws forbidding abortion and birth control), but by privileging the image of nurturing middle-class mothers who sacrifice their own needs in favor of their children these texts attest to the continuing dominance of middle-class values. Their images of family and female virtue mirror the credos of German *Bildungsbürgertum,* as outlined in the introduction, whose ethical premises had remained seminally influential

throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century.[34] Even when an author like Baum or Keun challenged those assumptions, recognizing that these older discourses had become threadbare and that they scarcely corresponded to urban women's life in Weimar (if they ever did, even in the Wilhelmine era), the novels they produced experienced more commercial success when they embraced happy ends rather than attesting to the era's instability.

In the following chapter I therefore turn to the novels' own prose to show how the nuances in the presentation of these dominant images often pose caveats to the likelihood of a happy end, while simultaneously contributing to the larger hegemonic discourse restricting the identities of adult females in Germany.

[34] For a more detailed discussion of the topic, see Cauleen Suzanne Gary "Bildung and Gender" and also Perry Wayne Myers Jr., "The Double-Edged Sword.".

Chapter 2: Mothers in Weimar Novels

This chapter will return to the four novels introduced in Chapter 1 to analyze how tropes and stereotypes about mothers and women are used to structure their plots. The centerpiece for these analyses will be Vicki Baum's *Helene Willfüer*, because it had by far the greatest readership in its time, an important criterion in drawing conclusions about Germany's social imaginary, as well as because its heroine's decisions challenge traditional German role models most overtly. This in turn, as I argue, prompted the literary establishment to interfere with the novel's production. The other three novels will be treated in less detail, in no small part because they merely serve to highlight similar or diverging ways of how adult women "can be spoken of."

My attention to the details of the discourses involved will provide the reader with the materials to assess the position of each novel within Weimar's horizon of expectation—as representing the social and political types most cherished for the new generation of German woman. As will be documented, the range of images provided to the broad middle class of readers who turned two of these books into bestsellers remains surprisingly narrow. Hence, the very few limited efforts made during the Weimar Republic in regard to women's rights and economic welfare in its constitution and law code emerge as relevant to the females depicted here.

VICKI BAUM: HERALDING OPTIONS WHILE AFFIRMING A PAST

Superficially, Baum's heroine represents as a new, positive model, showing her readership a woman who can succeed despite negative circumstances. Read in this way, the book and its popularity suggest a turning point in attitude toward the range of "acceptable" roles for women at the time. The following analysis, however, illustrates that, despite the progressive depiction of a single working mother who overcomes social, educational, and economic obstacles, the narrative remains an example of women's choices circumscribed by a male-dominated society. Instead of providing a blueprint for women on how to become independent, this popular novel draws a utopian picture with a *deus ex machina* ending that features a heroine who has found fulfillment in work and single motherhood, and thereafter makes an advantageous marriage. As both the historical accounts and the other novels I present bear witness, such a "happy end" was far from anything the average woman in the Weimar Republic could hope to emulate.

In *Stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* author Vicki Baum incorporates several strands of the prevalent cultural discourses related to the roles of women in the Weimar Republic, manifestations of which are tied on the plot level to the experiences of the main character Helene Willfüer, a "young girl" (5) studying chemistry.[1] Baum chose to introduce Helene on a train, a setting suggesting transience and also emphasizing her independence as a young woman traveling alone—she is not simply "young." In conjunction with Helene's

[1] "das junge Mädchen" (5)

independence, however, the writer highlights her nurturing and virtuous qualities. On the first page the reader learns that this young woman has just given up her seat in order to make room for a "exhausted proletarian" (5) mother and her baby.[2] Furthermore, when asked to hold the child for a moment, the narrator describes Helene's feeling as an overwhelming "kind of happiness" (6).[3] This casual encounter has become "a special and beautiful experience" (7).

In preparing the reader for Helene's later nurturing role, Baum has, from the very onset of the novel, introduced Helene to us in terms of her "natural disposition for motherhood" (von Ankum 176). At the same time, holding the child is not the only source of delight for the heroine in this passage. The character's thoughts expressed in free indirect speech display joy over the "triumph" (6) she feels by having managed to continue her studies, despite the dire financial situation resulting from the recent death of her father. [4] In this opening scene, then, the author has grafted together two different reasons for happiness, one more traditional than the other: motherhood and work. However, from these initial pages and throughout the novel, the reader has multiple similar opportunities to concretize Helene as a woman whose thinking focuses on success in her work, but whose involuntary responses are consistently oriented toward the needs of others.

That duality points to an unmentioned historical fact of bourgeois female life. During the Weimar Republic, women who were allowed to study or otherwise prepare for

[2] "abgebrauchte proletarische" (5).
[3] "eine Art Glück" (6).
[4] "Triumph" (6).

work were able to devote to their careers usually only for a "period between youth and marriage/motherhood" (Frevert 200) that would pass by quickly—just like the train. Society expected even university-educated women to ultimately devote themselves exclusively to their children and to abandon their professions.[5] Reading the opening scene of the novel against this backdrop suggests that Vicki Baum did not introduce her main character with the attributes of a grown woman in an academic environment in part because such women rarely existed. Instead, she presents a girl with professional aspirations, a common phenomenon in the Weimar era, and frames her as possessing a nurturing disposition. The readers would be reassured of her normalcy and relegate her to being in a period of middle-class life preceding marriage.

Class and virtue boundaries are also drawn clearly into the novel. Shortly thereafter, Baum introduces the figure of a "sick female proletarian, who tried to interrupt her sixth pregnancy in a dark manner, and who now lies there, tired and content and bloodless" (25),[6] a dreary image that complements the descriptions of Helene's everyday life, her friends, and the town of Heidelberg with its state-of-the-art clinics but also some less reputable medical practices. As the narrative progresses, it changes from presenting motherhood as a source of joy and happiness to the dangers that frequently awaited poor women seeking illegal abortions—and abortions necessary because of the unnamed financial crises of postwar Germany and Europe. With this plot development, Baum's narrative underscores both the high incidence of unwanted pregnancies in the era and the

[5] See Elisabeth Knoblauch, *Zur Psychologie der studierenden Frau*

[6] "kranke Arbeiterfrau, welche auf dunkle Weise versucht hat, ihre sechste Schwangerschaft zu unterbrechen, und die ganz müde und zufrieden und ausgeblutet daliegt" (25).

prevalence of abortions, but she achieves an interesting dual focus. A subsequent paragraph introduces the medical student Rainer, Helene's later lover and father of her child. In doing so, Vicki Baum links him narratively to the topic of unplanned pregnancy and abortion and, at the same time, to the question of class-bound expectations and realities.

The liaison reemphasizes Helene's penchant for nurturing, as well as her place in a distinctly bourgeois social formation. Instead of finding a partner, Helene develops a surrogate relationship with a man who is emotionally needy and immature (71).[7] Helene uses Rainer's childhood nickname "Firilei," because she feels more "like a tall, old and wise mother" (71) than his girlfriend.[8] She does not share his desire for physical intimacy (76). Yet Rainer insists on having intercourse as proof of her love, an argument causing Helene to surrender, as if she were a somnambulist (89),[9] "more out of duty than passion" (121), as she later admits.[10] Her compliance introduces a theme that pervades the novel: the difference between what a woman really *wants* versus what she *does* to fulfill her social role by succumbing to male expectations and coercion.[11]

Several weeks after this single act of intercourse, Helene collapses in the chemistry lab. Looking for a logical explanation, pregnancy comes to her mind. Yet reflecting contemporary discourses of women's frequently limited understanding of

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[7] "Firilei nannte sie ihn" (71).
[8] "wie eine große, alte und weise Mutter" (71).
[9] "schlafwandlerisch" (89).
[10] "mehr aus Verpflichtung denn aus Leidenschaft" (121).
[11] While this passage also lends itself to a psychoanalytical reading in the context of subjectivity and desire, especially when it comes to the female subject, I chose not to engage with such an approach to the text as it would not benefit my focus on identities constructed by discourses.

sexual practices and insufficient information on conception as well as contraception, Helene believes (or wishes that) a pregnancy is "absolutely impossible. Something like that cannot happen, dear God, dear God, that is impossible" (92).[12] Although the protagonist eventually acknowledges that her pregnancy is real, Baum continues to frame Helene's internal thought about having her child as an impossibility,[13] as good bourgeois daughters everywhere would hope:

> That is set in stone: one does not have a child. Indeed, one lives responsibly, one owns all sorts of freedom, one does not know anything about the narrow concepts of previous eras, one has absolutely no moral objections against the illegitimate mother: But one does not have a child, if one studies chemistry and works toward a doctoral degree. (121-22)[14]

Instead of "I," reflecting Helene's personal perspective, Baum's heroine utilizes the indefinite pronoun "one" (the German *man*) in this passage regarding the impossibility of bearing her child. Expressing third-person rather than personal opinions, Helene's thoughts suggest conflicts in dominant public discourses, which, while acknowledging changing social practices, argue that even a highly educated woman cannot become a mother and continue her career.

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[12] "ganz und gar unmöglich. So etwas kann doch nicht geschehen, lieber Gott, lieber Gott, das ist nicht möglich—" (92).

[13] Interestingly, in later editions of the book the option of abortion becomes the impossibility. This passage, as well as all others representing thoughts of abortion, have been either completely omitted or significantly altered in reprints of the novel since 1951, the first reprint after WWII, as a comparison of all available editions I conducted at the National Library in Frankfurt am Main revealed. While the book had been censored during the Third Reich, publishers post-WWII were seemingly more repressive than at the time of the novel's publication, a topic which will be further discussed in chapter four.

[14] "Eines steht unverrückbar fest: man bekommt kein Kind. Man lebt zwar unter eigener Verantwortung, man besitzt jede Freiheit, man weiß nichts von den engen Begriffen früherer Epochen, man hat moralisch gegen die uneheliche Mutter durchaus nichts einzuwenden: Aber man bekommt kein Kind, wenn man Chemie studiert und seinen Doktor baut" (121-12).

Baum's Helene alludes here to a contemporary reality. In contrast to many female university students at the time who wished to combine motherhood and the career they had invested so much time and effort into, society regarded this combination as incompatible. Elisabeth Knoblauch's study, *Zur Psychologie der studierenden Frau: Eine Untersuchung über die Einstellung zum Studium und zur späteren Berufstätigkeit bei Studentinnen* (1930), documents the widespread prevalence of such opposing convictions (445). Given the social dicta of the period, motherhood inevitably did usually imply giving up all professional aspirations, and so a woman who wanted to continue working in her field had little choice other than to abort her pregnancy. At the same time, this choice had other ramifications, as the proletarian mother's image suggests: those who knew this landscape would understand that this choice may have entailed a back-alley abortion from the local angel-maker rather than from a real doctor.

Yet Baum persists in depicting an unvarnished, realistic heroine. Helene's subsequent decision to have an abortion is not based on society's ideas about motherhood in relation to careers, but rather on her lack of moral and financial support. In a dialogue with the female gynecologist Dr. Gropius, she states in free direct speech using the personal pronoun "I" (*Ich*): "I have not a single person on this world that I could hold onto. I do not have the time, the money, the slightest possibility of bearing a child, supporting it, of educating it" (132).[15] Using the personal pronoun "I," not the indefinite pronoun "one" (*man*), the protagonist expresses in this passage not public discourses, but

[15] "Ich habe keinen einzigen Menschen auf der Welt, an den ich mich halten könnte. Ich habe nicht die Zeit, nicht das Geld, nicht die leiseste Möglichkeit ein Kind zur Welt zu bringen, ein Kind zu erhalten, zu erziehen" (132).

her own convictions, couched in vocabulary about "responsible parenting" that would persist throughout the twentieth century. Helene's wish to abort her baby is rooted in her economic circumstances, which are themselves brought into being by her lack of family support or a viable marriage option. Without a support system, she sees herself incapable of rearing a child as an unmarried mother.

The female gynecologist whom Helene consults acknowledges this reality, but finds herself unable to help given the risks of legal consequences, referring to what she acknowledges as the "ominous paragraph" (132) criminalizing abortion.[16] Dr. Gropius makes clear that she deeply regrets frequently having to send away countless "poor women, who have five and six and seven children, and do not know what to do in their desperation" (132).[17] The doctor can only suggest that Helene bear the child, regardless of her current situation, pointing out recent social developments like free homes for expectant mothers and legal changes regarding the situation of unmarried mothers and illegitimate children (130).[18]

At this juncture Vicki Baum reflects a range of contemporary rhetoric or spheres of interest beyond the limited image of the bourgeoisie. A heteroglossia of social viewpoints is represented in the doctor's commentary on subjects such as the government-imposed legal restrictions on women's reproductive choice causing

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[16] "ominösen Paragraphen" (132).

[17] "die fünf und sechs und sieben Kinder haben und vor Elend nicht aus und nicht ein wissen" (132).

[18] Dr. Gropius warns Helene also of turning to "quacks" ("Pfuscher" [133]) for an abortion that might cost her life. Yet while official medical discourse at the time stated that the majority of illegal abortions ended with medical complications and perhaps even death of the pregnant woman, the historian Cornelie Usborne reveals that the ratio between abortions performed and complications occurred was not alarming at all. Instead, Usborne claims that the campaign against quackery was part of the professionalization of medicine and the efforts of doctors to gain the medical monopoly (*Cultures of Abortion,* 108-21).

unwanted pregnancies, the widespread economic misery in the Weimar Republic, and recent medical and legal developments addressing the situation of unmarried mothers. Using a female doctor's voice to reference the options of women in the Weimar Republic, Baum contextualizes her remarks as those of as an educated woman's perspective on the ways a male-dominated society sets the parameters for what women *can* and *cannot* do. Concomitantly, however, that voice points to a double standard, as these restrictions did seemingly apply with lesser force to women with sufficient financial resources, while at the same time putting them at lower risk. If Helene had had the thousand marks with which to pay Professor Riemenschneider, the male gynecologist she consulted, she could have had a safe and discreet abortion in a private clinic like his upper-class clientele (126). Yet this amount was about as much as what she needed to support herself while completing her degree, a sum so incredibly high that only the very wealthy could afford it. Middle and working-class women or poor students like Helene did not have this option.

Unable to have an abortion, Helene returns to Rainer, who suggests suicide after he learns about the pregnancy: "He felt too weak for the responsibility that he was expected to shoulder" (182).[19] Helene, subject to "his influence" (182) at first agrees to this idea,[20] but changes her mind at the last moment. Instead of committing suicide with the father of her unborn child, she chooses to live and take care of the baby as a single mother. Although her innocence regarding Rainer's suicide was established by the

[19] "Er fühlte sich zu schwach für die Verantwortung, die ihm zugemutet wurde" (182).
[20] "unter seinem Einfluß" (182).

authorities after his death, the resulting scandal required that she leave Heidelberg and continue her studies in Munich. The reader learns about Helene's experiences there only through letters she writes to one of her few remaining friends, Kranich, the owner of a bookstore Helene frequented while in Heidelberg and who supports her later.

Commonly employed by authors as a means to emphasize authenticity (Schwarze 180-81), letters in novels not only allow the protagonists to describe their situation, but also to reflect on it from their individual moral and psychological points of view (Kloocke 196-97). The reader has access to only a subjective perspective regarding the struggles Helene is facing in Munich. Critics who analyze epistolary novels have asserted that everything that is missing from this larger picture is irrelevant to the writer's represented reality (Kloocke 203). By framing Helene's experiences during her time in Munich in the genre of personal letters, written from the perspective of an unmarried, pregnant woman, however, Vicki Baum thus focuses at this point in the novel on the consequences of single motherhood.

As soon as her pregnancy becomes evident, Helene experiences that, as an unmarried mother-to-be, despite the "New Woman" discourses of the day, she is considered unacceptable in most social circles. Thus due to her "immoral and offensive condition" (208),[21] Helene loses her home in a respectable Munich neighborhood, underscoring the beginning of her social downfall. Subsequently, she describes becoming a social outcast, living in virtual isolation from her fellow students (205). "You know that a female student with a child is nonsense, and perhaps you can imagine how they [*man*]

[21] "unmoralischen und ärgerniserregenden Zustand" (208).

treat me" Helene informs her old friend (204).[22] Through the discourse marker "you know" Baum introduces the *known* fact and society's shared belief,[23] namely the incompatibility of motherhood and working toward a doctoral degree, in the main clause. Then the author links this information to the way Helene, who is violating the social norm of her day, is treated, emphasized again by the German pronoun "*man*" ("one"/ "they") referring to the general public and how things simply are—Helene is not overtly questioning her censure, just suffering it. Although Baum does not explicitly state how Helene suffers, the reader can envision it. The structure of the text, in combination with the readership's knowledge of social repercussions as result of abnormal behavior in any society, prevents any other interpretation of the utterance.

Furthermore, the reader learns through the letters that Helene's work in the university lab has been conducted under a barrage of verbal insults. Only through the help of her new mentor, Professor Brockhaus, who applauds Helene's work in front of her male colleagues, is she spared further humiliation (215). The bookseller Kranich sends her the necessities for the baby that Helene could never have afforded (216). The painter Dartschenko, whose chance offer to paint Helene leads to a friendship with him and his wife, helps her have enough food to survive (216), saves her from living in a home for expectant mothers where she would have had to serve as a study object for

[22] "Sie wissen, daß eine Studentin mit einem Kind ein Nonsens ist, und vielleicht können Sie sich ausmalen, wie man mich behandelt" (204).

[23] Aside from the fact that this particular discourse marker introduces shared knowledge and beliefs, it is also used primarily by middle-class women (van Dijk 177), indicating the shared social class of speaker (here the author) and the recipients (here the reader).

medical students (216),[24] and later pays for a nursery where the child can stay while its mother searches for work. Helene acknowledges that without Dartschenko's help, "the child would have been put in a welfare program" (228).[25] Three representatives of the middle class from which Helene stems, a brave professor, a bookseller, as well as an artist, show her the compassion that society as a whole will not.

Although Helene graduates summa cum laude (226), her situation does not improve. Helene is unemployed for months. She takes on every possible job from shop assistant to nanny to maid (229), but none of these provide lasting employment, largely after employers learn she is a single mother. When, for example, she finds a position as laboratory assistant in the chemical industry, she loses it as soon as the company learns she has a child (226). In her despair, the protagonist temporarily even knits potholders for a welfare organization supporting poor women, thus visibly demonstrating that she is falling out of her class (229). At last, however, Helene is able to work in a pharmacy, performing simple tasks for which she is overqualified (227), earning just enough money for her and her son to survive. Interestingly, too, she arranges for childcare by living with a family from the lower classes, whose mother acts as a live-in nanny to save both their children. A completely unorthodox solution from the day's bourgeois point of view, it is one in line with liberal social theorists who at this time were suggesting communal day care and kitchens for the lower, working classes of mothers—a *good* result of Helene

[24] Serving as study objects for medical students was feared by expectant mothers for two major reasons, as references in the text suggest (75, 216): public humiliation and the fear of diseases. In this context, the intertextuality with Helene Böhlau's work *Halbtier!* is noteworthy. Böhlau criticized in her feminist narrative the conditions under which single mothers without financial means had to give birth, unable to escape the eyes and hands of male medical students.

[25] "wäre das Kind unter öffentliche Fürsorge gekommen" (208).

moving out of the bourgeois model and finding a kind of female solidarity outside her own class.

Through this representation of social stigmatization resulting from Helene's status as a woman with an illegitimate child, Vicki Baum draws a bleak picture of unmarried mothers who must be self-supporting in the Weimar Republic: they are rejected by "proper" society, living without sufficient food in untenable housing conditions, either unemployed or having unstable jobs, and often barely able to support themselves and their children due to the wage structure of what jobs they can get. The author underscores that survival under these circumstances remains largely possible only for those women who receive some sort of private charitable support.

Yet Baum, herself a commercial author needing to earn a living, writes for Ullstein's middle-class mass audience seeking distraction from everyday life at the time. These bleak facts could not intrude too overtly into the novel. As Lynda J. King remarks, the publisher set strict parameters regarding what the company expected of a bestselling plot that would satisfy its customers (*Best-sellers by Design* 82-84). An author had to adjust his or her story so that it would allow for a happy ending. Hence, after the realistic portrayal of all the challenges Helene had to face, her situation takes a dramatic turn for the better when she encounters her admired former mentor from her Heidelberg studies, Professor Ambrosius.[26] He offers her a position as a member of a chemistry research

[26] It is probably no accident that this is the professor's name. Readers at the time might have caught an in joke: Merlin the magician who helped Arthur become king of the Britons had as his second name Ambrosius. Baum does not give Helene a fairy godmother, but instead a male magician who "lived backwards" toward his own youth. It is also significant that she receives help from either older males or married ones—never females who are not professionals like the doctor. Her other mentor Brockhaus is

team searching for a rejuvenation drug (233). This position not only fulfills Helene's professional dreams of finally putting her talent to work, but also allows her to keep and take care of her son. This resolution for Helene's dire circumstances, after choosing to be an unwed mother, constitutes "a utopian arrangement compared to the options available to most single mothers at the time" (King, "Vicki Baum" 156).

Further developments in the novel are equally utopian. Baum's heroine discovers a wonder drug, gains the distribution rights to it, and is hired by the chemical company that then produces the product. Helene thus turns into a poster child for the successful career woman. Nonetheless, at the height of her success, she has realized her intellectual potential and is finally able to "have a lot of wonderful time for Tintin," her son Valentin (272).[27] Helene feels she has not spent enough time with him in the past and now hopes to make up for it, a direct reflection of the discourses on "ambitious" working mothers "neglecting" their children. During a vacation in Italy, mother and son then coincidentally meet her benefactor, Dr. Ambrosius, who some years previously had divorced his wife. Eventually, he and Helene marry; thus she and her son will attain social respectability, she need no longer work, and the novel closes with a happy ending, as scripted by "good society" during the Weimar Republic.

Set against a framework of discourses on women's reproductive choices as well as their place in the working world, Vicki Baum's *Stud. chem. Helene Willfüer* examines the negative implications of unwanted pregnancies, especially for unmarried mothers.

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named after the most famous *Conversations-Lexikon* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the encyclopedia most likely present in a bourgeois household with means—but very middle-brow.

[27] "viel herrliche Zeit für Tintin" (272).

While most scholars argue that the novel does little more than support "the status quo of paternal authority" (von Ankum 179), I propose a more nuanced interpretation. Read as a critique of discourses about the ostensibly liberated woman, Baum's narrative pinpoints and underscores the limited choices German women actually had during the 1920s.

Despite greater sexual freedom compared to previous eras, Helene becomes pregnant as a result of her relative ignorance about reproductive processes and carries the child to term in part because of her inability to pay for an abortion. Her alternatives at that point in the novel narrow to suicide or an ostracized life as a single parent. Choosing the latter, Helene's survival chances improve due to a handful of male friends and unusual opportunities. Without the help of the Munich professor Brockhaus, and her friends Kranich, Dartschenko, and Professor Ambrosius, this single mother without financial means, although unusually intelligent and hardworking, could not have become a self-sufficient and successful individual able to support herself and her child. Viewed in this light, the novel becomes a testimonial for the need to overcome the status quo of patriarchal society's restrictions on women's choices.

The utopian conclusion to Helene's struggles provides her with a life far from anything the average unmarried mother in the Weimar Republic could hope for, a message that the novel's prior 288 of its 298 pages have relentlessly emphasized at every turn. Moreover, in marrying Professor Ambrosius, Helene ultimately gives up her quest for independence and professional aspirations. The time devoted to her career remains the traditional period between youth and the caesura of marriage, the only slightly expanded options open to Weimar women, even university-educated ones. The overarching

message the reader thus receives is that a middle-class woman will eventually have to give up her work in favor of forming a family to find fulfillment and, equally important, to bring up her children the "proper" way. As a working mother, Helene the "career woman" was unable to devote enough time to her son, basically "neglecting" him for her own "ambitious" research. Hence, Baum's novel—whether consciously or not—ultimately "frees" Helene from the combination of work and motherhood, thereby erasing any possible *Rabenmutter* stigma.

In essence, then, Helene's marriage fulfills the reader's social expectations about a romance novel by underscoring the discursive representations of the time. The novel illustrates dualities women confronted in Weimar society. Ullstein wanted to sell an entertaining love story, not a feminist manifesto, but was willing to let Baum embed sufficient illustrations and discourses of the day to enable the thoughtful reader to recognize her novel's underlying messages. However, the publisher agreed to publication as a book edition only after the novel had been a proven success as a serialized novel that could be adapted to the market's taste quickly if needed. On the other hand, however, and independent from the publisher's demands, the author also contributed to a division in public consciousness regarding the representation of motherhood in terms of class through the ideological workings of her language use throughout the novel. Helene, the heroine, portrayed as a tall woman, literally stands above all the dirty and sick working-class women (and mothers) she encounters. She elevates herself not only over the misery of the others, but also over her own. Baum created a character who, in contrast to working- and upper-class women, bears her unwanted child with pride, despite all her

sacrifices along the way, and serves as unconscious role for middle-class women who recognize in Helene's life the threat of falling out of class position, but also the promise of redemption by the love of a good man and establishing a nuclear family. Hence, by tying the "good" mother to the bourgeoisie, the author describes structures of social domination without challenging their behavioral norms.

REINFORCING THE BOURGEOIS PUBLIC SPHERE: OTHER LITERARY MOTHERS IN WEIMAR

When compared with Baum's novel, the works of Andreas-Salomé, Keun, and Kolb have parallels and differences in how they represent women's participation in the public sphere as mothers, further clarifying the social ideologies at play that speak to ways women were supposed to behave in Weimar Germany. These novels do not draw the same kind of narrative threads found in *Helene Willfüer,* yet they each contribute fundamental insights about Weimar's dominant bourgeois stereotypes for women.

Reproducing the characteristic discourses on motherhood in the aftermath of the war, Kolb's *Daphne Herbst* goes backwards in time to depict the breakdown of pre-WWI society's bourgeois values by drawing a line back to the images of intact families from before the war, contrasting their dynamics with the disrupted, almost dysfunctional families of her era. Manifestations of the collapse of ethical behavior, faulty or inadequate educational options, and a commensurate breakdown in social responsibility commence in Kolb's novel with the death of the family's cherished daughter Constanze,

whose loss represents a devastating blow to the family dynamic. Her siblings Franzl and Daphne blame the late born Flick for Constanze's death "for it was *her* disease. *She* had brought it home" (34).[28]

When, shortly after Constanze's death, the distracted mother Helga is run over by a car and dies as well, the responsibility for the family's welfare rests with the father. He finds himself unable to exercise parental authority for "he never was a father; the role of the younger sibling that his children had assigned him early on—guessing right about his timidness—was the only one that pleased his heart" (142).[29] As a result he decides that he is ill-suited to raise his children (180) and consequently,[30] his son Franzl moves to Munich in order to live with an uncle, while Flick is sent to a countryside boarding school run by nuns. After the family matriarch dies, the father completely abdicates his role as patriarch,

The norms of the nineteenth century seem to prevail in the expectations of this family. Left alone with her father, the adult daughter Daphne, an unmarried woman in her early twenties, dutifully takes care of him, instead of pursuing her career as a gifted painter. Thus, this narrative, too, serves as an example of the incompatibility of a woman's professional aspirations and the role of the family caretaker. References in the text suggest that, in so doing, the main protagonist views this emulation of her mother (who also gave up her career as a famous pianist in order to marry) as appropriate for

[28] "Es war *ihre* Krankheit gewesen. *Sie* hatte sie ins Haus gebracht" (34).
[29] "Ein Vater war er nie gewesen; die Rolle des jüngeren Bruders, die seine frühen Kinder ihm zugewiesen hatten—seine Scheu erratend—, war die einzige, die sein Herz erfreute, . . . " (142).
[30] "Erzieherische Versuche lagen ihm nicht" (180).

female children in the family. Moreover, when she later wishes to marry, she decides "Flick should replace her for the father, before she would leave him" (51).[31] But since Flick has had no models in the convent for exercising conventional maternal authority, she is unable to assume responsibility for her father or her siblings. Her responses are random and even irrational rather than purposeful— she has not learned how to be a proper caregiver or mother. "Like conductors without a joint connection, that is how her intellectual wiring hung loose" (145).[32] Naïve and socially maladjusted, her "societal clumsiness" (138) not surprisingly causes conflicts within the family and society at large,[33] culminating in actions which lead to both Franzl's and Daphne's deaths. Neither nurtured herself nor prepared for the role of a nurturing adult, Flick is a victim of the circumstances rather than the one to blame, as "she did not know what she did" (211).[34]

In the plot lines and discourses of the novel, Kolb represents the mother as the vital component in family survival. With Helga's death, her children are deprived of moral authority and nurturing stability, because paternal authority is incompetent. The absence of the mother not only deprives her children of an ideal upbringing, but even leaves the family adrift and ultimately annihilates it. Consequently, this work with its focus on the older daughter as a replacement mother, more explicitly than *Helene Willfüer, Gilgi—eine von uns*, or *Das Haus,* echoes Johann Jacob Bachofen's concept of mothers as the progenitors in every sense but the biological sense, expressed at length in

[31] "Flick sollte sie bei ihrem Vater ersetzten, bevor sie diesen verließ" (51).
[32] "Wie Drähte ohne Knotenpunkt, so hingen alle Leitungen ihres Intellektes leer" (145).
[33] "gesellschaftliches Ungeschickt" (138).
[34] "sie wußte nicht, was sie tat" (211).

his work *Mutterrecht* (1861). In their crucial function as mentors and spiritual guides for children's social and moral development, mothers actually cultivate not only individuals, but society at large and in doing so defend it from complete barbarism.

By stressing the negative consequences of an absent nurturing mother, Kolb's novel examines the dominant discourses of the Weimar Republic regarding the significance of the mother for the survival of the state, and it appears feminist in its support for the women's cause. Her novel is set against a framework of disrupted social structures: flawed medical practices, inadequate educational and employment options for women. Yet in *Daphne Herbst*, societal disarray can only be addressed by mothers and daughters who fulfill their social and moral duties, not by other social-welfare frameworks. Their *raison d'être* as women is to become mothers or surrogate mothers. The novel is thus actually a fairly conservative case study about what will happen to families if young women fail to perform these established gender roles. In this sense, Kolb's work also supports the conservatism of public discourses in the 1920s that deplores the "failure" of women to marry and commit their lives solely to a husband and children. At the same time, Kolb illustrates the passive, often unwilling role women play in becoming mothers. Daphne makes the statement "I will hopefully be saved from it" (110) with regard to bearing children in the context of her experiences as a surrogate mother,[35] underscoring her desire to break out of a woman's *natural* gender role.

Despite the more liberal options illustrated in *Helene Willfüer*, however, Baum's protagonist nevertheless experienced even more limited choices in becoming a mother

[35] "Ich bleibe hoffentlich davor bewahrt" (110).

outside of bourgeois norms: either committing suicide with the father of her unborn child or to go on living, bear and take care of that child as a single parent, outside of proper society. Baum and Kolb thus have in common that they both shed light on essentially the same two central issues. First, the very limited choices and familial constrictions women who wish to become self-sufficient face—and the high price that they must pay. Second, both agree on the moral stipulations imposed on women. When her suitor Professor Ambrosius demands at the end of Baum's novel "You must help me and you will help me. I do not see well. I have become clumsy" (188),[36] he seems, in his proposal of marriage, to appeal to Helene's moral decency and virtuous caretaking rather than trying to convince her of his fervid love. Still, the superficially happy ending lets the nurturing mother role appear less constricting than in Kolb's cautionary tale about consequences when women fail to fulfill this role. Arguably, then, Baum's novel lets its female readers identify with Willfüer's successful quest for self-fulfillment, until the end of the novel. Whether she will maintain her independence in marriage is an issue Baum does not address. That said, the prospect of becoming a nurturing woman for a needy husband most likely would appear to Baum's intended readership as preferable to the continuous oppression experienced by Annette Kolb's protagonist in *Daphne Herbst*—this novel was destined to be less popular than Baum's book. Kolb critiques the bourgeoisie by showing inept members of the class and the calamities they bring, but unlike Baum, no voices in her novel speak explicitly about the fault lines in Weimar society's middle-class values that constricted the lives of Germany's women and mothers.

[36] "Du mußt mir helfen und du wirst mir helfen. Ich sehe schlecht. Ich bin ungeschickt geworden" (188).

Although also thematizing oppression, Andreas-Salomé's *Das Haus* utilizes a different narrative strategy than the other writers. Whereas conservatives in post-WWI Germany castigated the postwar generation as irresponsible and selfish, the opposing points of view espoused by Andreas-Salomé's protagonists very directly cavil against the subordination of women and their self-dissolution in marriage and motherhood. As a critique of public discourses about the liberated woman, Andreas-Salomé's novel depicts social conventions of the Wilhelmine era still dominant during the 1920s: a society that limits a woman's autonomy and control over her life. Given the author's own background as a bourgeois intellectual, it is not surprising that her novel, like Kolb's, commences with an intact bourgeois family, reflecting middle-class behaviors and assumptions.

In *Das Haus* the then-dominant postwar discourses about the need to restore male authority and the prewar patriarchal order are embodied in the authoritarian father Frank Branhardt. As Muriel Cormican points out, this head of the family is the one "around whom the other figures revolve, and in reaction to whom they define themselves" (129). The author portrays Frank's wife Anneliese as a woman whose family arranged an "advantageous" marriage for her when she was only seventeen. On the cusp of adulthood, the then-young girl had to give up her developing personal identity as a promising musician. This text, too, thus emphasizes common middle-class practice that the time a woman can devote to her career ends with marriage and the establishment of a family.

When Anneliese's daughter Gitta later chooses a husband herself instead of entering an arranged marriage, history still seems to repeat itself in with regard to identity loss. In the context of Gitta's marriage, her narrative voice refers to the loss of personal

privacy, of anything of her own, that marriage imposed (117).[37] The narrative voice suggests that Gitta, the individual, must become *one* with her husband. Anneliese's perspective demonstrates the same insight, namely that a woman has to abandon her independence with marriage, and her tone, too, reflects that of a good daughter of the bourgeoisie. Her lament, "Frank, I am only you. I am nothing except you"[38] (183), expresses her identity loss and her surrogate existence as her husband's alter ego.

Although Anneliese accepts her husband's authority in all other matters, as her children mature, she begins to balk at his decisions when she views then as affecting her children detrimentally. The husband's responses echo contemporary discourses linking liberalization of family practices with a loss in moral values. As he sees it, his wife fails first to suppress Gitta's developing sexuality and later supports the daughter's flight from her husband, once the girl's idealistic ideas of marriage collapse; the mother also backs the son's wishes to quit his university studies in order to become a poet. At this, Frank accuses Anneliese of "motherly oversensitivity"[39] (132). In particular with regard to Balduin, his son, he asserts that when she seeks to prevent her children from being disciplined, that she is being "poetically fatalistic"[40] (132) and that acknowledging such sensitivities "is no way to raise children"[41] (132). Instead, he believes his wife would

[37] The German original states: "das war ja eben gerade 'die Ehe', daß man nichts privates besaß" (117).
[38] "Frank, ich bin ja nur noch du! Nichts bin ich außer dir" (183).
[39] "Mutterzärtlichkeit" (132).
[40] "poetisch-fatalistisch" (132).
[41] "so lassen sich Kinder nicht erziehen" (132).

serve their son best by "obeying him more fully"[42] (134). Particularly in the raising of sons, he asserts, the father's voice must supersede the mother's.

It is as a mother, however, that Anneliese attempts to assert herself. She refuses to affirm the use of force as means of raising children. Yet Anneliese's response to her husband's demand for unconditional allegiance is to call it the most brutal form of punishment to impose on another human, equal to rape (134).[43] She thereby condemns not only Frank's approach to force his will on Balduin, but also enunciates her own feelings of frustration.[44] Echoing Klaus Theweleit's idea of soldiers returning from the front, most of whom have few if any images of women as peers and partners, the emotionally estranged Frank, however, is neither accustomed to nor capable of viewing his wife and the mother of his children as an autonomous individual with her own rights. Anneliese's narrative voice thus compares the role of mothers to that of "hybrids, that's what we are—who give birth without knowledge of what we have produced, raise children, without knowing who they are, responsible for them without knowing how to be" (61).[45]

In stages over the course of the novel, Anneliese develops an awareness about her lack of self-determination, gradually sparking increasing resistance to her status as a nonentity. Still, at the end of the narrative, another pregnancy awaits Anneliese, "the born

[42] "besser zu gehorchen" (134).
[43] "das Ärgste, was es unter dem Himmel gibt—das ist die Vergewaltigung des einen durch den andern" (134).
[44] Muriel Cormical also observes that with such assertions Anneliese reflects her own subservient situation.
[45] "Zwittergeschöpfe, das sind wir—die gebären, ohne zu wissen was, erziehen, ohne zu wissen wen, verantworten müssen, ohne zu wissen wie" (61).

mother" (19).[46] As she had vehemently opposed Frank's wishes for more children, this is the most significant example for the protagonist's lack of control over her own life. Consequently, illustrating her resignation and hopeless situation, all of Anneliese's aspirations about gaining more autonomy vanish. Yet her feelings regarding the child she carries are ambiguous. On the one hand, the child symbolizes her defeat, but on the other hand, Anneliese loves it. When she assures Frank that they will remain *one* and "not two" (137),[47] the natural love for her child is thus portrayed as the "appeal of subordination" (55),[48] the supposedly natural quality inherent to all women that they have to learn to resist, as Anneliese's feminist friend Renate claims.

Set against the framework of discourses dealing with the significance of the father in postwar Germany, Lou Andreas-Salomé's *Das Haus* thus depicts more explicitly than *Helene Willfüer*, *Gilgi—eine von uns*, and *Daphne Herbst* a plot structure about subordination of women in marriage leading to self-dissolution—a dystopian version of the idyll of domesticity for Wilhelmine Germany. The text suggests that idyll is a myth: Instead of domestic bliss, marriage results in the loss of individual identity as well as decision-making authority. The mother in this novel is depicted as helpless, and her husband's house turns into a "cage" (76) from which she cannot escape.[49] The compelled continuation of the mother role throughout her marriage incarcerates Anneliese permanently.

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[46] "Die geborene Mutter" (19).
[47] "nicht zwei" (137).
[48] "Reiz der Unterordnung" (55).
[49] "Käfig" (76).

That depiction in Andreas-Salomé's novel and personal perspectives mirrors Vicki Baum's declaration that marriage is a prison, "a terrible prison in which innocent women are subjected to a life sentence" (*Es war alles ganz anders* 150).[50] Interestingly, however, Andreas-Salomé emphasizes in *Das Haus* that responsible motherhood should constitute a place for resistance as well as subservience to one's partner. In this way, the novel underscores social and psychological problems women experience and relates them to the social discourses of the 1920s. On the one hand, women were told they should refuse to be defined exclusively by their biological ability to bear children and attempt to maintain their status of independent individuals. On the other hand, mothers who loved their children and cared about them were frequently told that the exercise of parental rights was a domain reserved for fathers. Thus, Andreas-Salomé emphasizes a dilemma married women of her day commonly confronted: become a mother who is not a self-actualizing partner in marriage—or maintain one's independence and stay single.

In her focus on societal inhibitors to female autonomy, Andreas-Salomé's *Das Haus* deals with the same central issues as Vicki Baum's *Helene Willfüer*. However, while Andreas-Salomé's novel presents a compelling and realistic picture of women's predicament within the confines of a middle-class family, Vicki Baum's *Helene Willfüer* steps outside those constraints as a self-determined protagonist not only responsible for but also capable of raising her son alone. As a popular, escapist "women's novel" of its day, few readers could seriously believe they could emulate the unusually gifted and

[50] "ein schreckliches Gefängnis, in welchem unschuldige Frauen eine lebenslängliche Strafe verbüßten" (Baum, *Es war alles ganz anders* 150).

accomplished Helene. Still, both works comment on the oppressive male-dominated society of the Weimar Republic that constricted a woman's autonomy, but they do so in different ways. Andreas-Solomé's heroine's available choice is only to submit, to come to terms with her sole real option as a mother, deprived of any alternative opportunities, including that of a promising career that would have allowed her to support herself and thus maintain her independence. Vicki Baum allows the reader an entertainment, a successful struggle for independence against all odds that enables her readers to escape to the realm of fantasy or utopia. The documented small readership of *Das Haus* indicates women in the Weimar Republic preferred well-crafted escapism.

In reading Irmgard Keun's *Gilgi—eine von uns* in conjunction with the representations of motherhood in Andreas-Salomé and Baum, I reassess the implications seen by many feminist scholars heretofore—to revisit the Weimar era because they view it as characterized by self-determination and liberation of German women. They apply that perspective to Keun's novel, as a work thematizing an unwanted pregnancy at a time when contraceptives were not easily obtained and abortion was illegal, and suggest its reader *reconsider* the role of motherhood. In her comparison of *Helene Willfüer* and *Gilgi*, for instance, Katharina von Ankum argues that both narratives can be read as examples of what she terms "New Motherhood," the reconstruction of the modern family as an exclusive mother-child unit with a New Woman at its heart (173). She proposes that both texts cast single motherhood as a model of emancipation that preserves women's individual identity and grants them control over their own lives outside traditional family structures (173). From this vantage point, Ankum reads both *Helene Willfüer* and *Gilgi*—

eine von uns in a way that can be interpreted as diverging from *Daphne Herbst* and *Das Haus*, whose narratives present mothers confined in patriarchal households.

My caveat about these insights is that such a distinction overlooks important similarities that all four novels share. Read as testimonials about available options for German middle-class women to prevent unwanted pregnancies in the 1920s, each narrative addressed here, in its own way, actually underscores the *absence* of this alternative, no matter how realistic or idealistic. Despite the seemingly more liberated representations of mothers in Baum's and Keun's novels, all four works comment on the problem that, in the Weimar era, reproductive policies and related legal parameters were controlled by a male-dominated society's traditional bourgeois values. In such a reading, then, what sets Keun's work apart from *Helene Willfüer*, *Daphne Herbst* and *Das Haus* is not how her narrative represents a New Woman over and against a traditional mother, but rather on how it focuses on the issue of this patriarchal society's failure to exercise social responsibility precisely because it restricts a woman's reproductive choices. Keun's critique of the traditional family also mirrors the social and moral duties of women as depicted in the other three novels: like Willfüer and the protagonists in *Daphne Herbst* and *Das Haus*, Gilgi becomes a mother while at the same time protesting against the negative socially imposed preconditions of motherhood, whether a woman is single or married. Rather than depicting a liberating alternative for mothers, *Gilgi* most closely resembles *Daphne Herbst* in illustrating the price mothers and their children pay in a patriarchal system badly executed.

Augmenting that focus, Keun's *Gilgi* reproduces the contemporary discourses representative of widespread economic misery during the Weimar years and links them explicitly to women's need to learn about sexual practices and to have access to contraception as well as abortion. These discourses on the plot level are manifested in the experiences of Gilgi, a typist and the prototype of the era's new, independent working woman, who discovers on her twenty-first birthday that she "accidently came into the world" (33).[51] The protagonist learns that her biological mother was a young, single, upper-class girl who did not become aware of her pregnancy until it was too late to have an abortion, but could not keep this child because "her future would be ruined" (49).[52] Hence, Gilgi's mother gave birth in secret and paid a seamstress without any family ties to take care of the unwanted baby (49). However, the surrogate mother soon found this was a bad bargain. Her neighbors as well as her clients found an unmarried woman with a baby socially unacceptable. Thus, "because of the child" (51), the seamstress lost her home in a respectable part of town and her employers as well.[53] Relief from the hardships she had to suffer as a single mother came only when a bourgeois family offered to adopt the baby girl (52). The parallels to Baum's novel are clear in this novel's depiction of class boundaries and morality.

Another representation of the social consequences resulting from an unplanned pregnancy is illustrated in Gilgi's relationship to her friend Hertha, a married woman unable to prevent repeated pregnancies. Hertha's husband Hans cannot sufficiently

[51] "ich bin aus Versehen zur Welt gekommen" (33).
[52] "ihre Zukunft wär ruiniert" (49).
[53] "wegem dem Kind" (51).

support his family, which forces them to live in poverty, and with each baby, their situation worsens (206). When asked by her male friend Pit why Hertha and Hans keep on having children then, Gilgi explains "they have only one bed" (221).[54] For her, sharing a bed inevitably leads to pregnancy, an inference suggesting the average woman's still limited knowledge about conception and contraception during that period (Frevert 186-87). Other scholars would note that *not* sharing a bed was the era's contraceptive practice that sent many a husband to prostitutes. Pit suggests abortion, whereupon Gilgi explains that Hertha and Hans cannot afford this solution (221). Thus multiple voices in Keun's text speak to the vicious circle that emerges when women are unable to prevent unwanted pregnancies and the extreme hardships that result. For all but those with financial means, dire poverty, in turn, can lead to decisions such as that of Hans, who in despair and facing his family's starvation decides unilaterally that his only recourse is to kill himself and his family.

Against the background of such events, the reader learns that Gilgi is pregnant. Like Helene Willfüer, she lacks a viable marriage option and ultimately chooses to keep her baby despite the negative outlook for her future. And like Baum's story, this novel's events and revelations reflect the social consequences, the pros and cons of that decision. Gilgi's vacillations entail a struggle that reflects the extreme impact of such a decision on her life. Through free indirect speech, leaving the voice floating between narrator and character, Keun first articulates Gilgi's internal debates about her pregnancy as a challenge that she can overcome: "one will hang in there—one way or the other—, a

[54] "Sie haben nur ein Bett" (221).

person has to have courage, then one will not be broken" (165).[55] Again, instead of an "I" reflecting Gilgi's personal perspective, Keun's Gilgi, like Baum's heroine Helene, utilizes the indefinite pronoun "one" (the German *man*) in this critical ruminative passage on single motherhood, rehearsing in her head public rather than personal opinion. Gilgi's thoughts thus reflect a strand of contemporary public discourses, the case made by society's "others" who argue that a single mother can survive in German society, if she only has enough courage.

This internal debate, however, stands in stark contrast to the protagonist's own beliefs based on actual experience, later expressed in free direct speech using the pronoun "I" (*Ich*): "I absolutely would not mind bearing five healthy illegitimate children, if I could support them. But I cannot" (175).[56] Like Helene, Gilgi bases her decision against the child on economic survival options and expresses her personal opinion in dialogues using the personal pronoun "I," not the previously used indefinite pronoun "one" (*man*). Moreover, after her gynecologist refuses to perform an abortion, Gilgi verbalizes her frustration, calling it "the greatest immorality and absurdity to have a woman give birth to a child, that she does not want" and "that she cannot feed" (176).[57]

Notably, the narrative voice has changed again, this time from the "I" form to the pronoun "she" addressing her male doctor, making a public assertion that aligns Gilgi's reflection with the position of women generally. In doing so, Gilgi's internal and

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[55] "Durchhalten wird man—so oder so—, Courage hat man, und kleinkriegen läßt man sich nicht" (165).
[56] "Würde mir absolut nichts ausmachen, fünf gesunde uneheliche Kinder in die Welt zu setzen, wenn ich für sie sorgen könnte. Aber das kann ich nicht" (175).
[57] "das Unmoralischste und Absurdeste, eine Frau ein Kind zur Welt bringen lassen, wenn sie es nicht haben will . . . das sie nicht ernähren kann" (176).

externalized heteroglossia reflects an amalgam of public discourses, addressing the arguments of the political left fighting the restrictions the government imposes on women's reproductive choice in relation to personal as well as economic circumstances.[58] Through her protagonist, Keun critiques not only the status quo of women's rights during the Weimar Republic, she also scathingly criticizes patriarchal Weimar for ignoring a situation in which women must bear children regardless of social realities.

Mirroring society's different perspectives on single motherhood, this heteroglossia of the protagonist's voices are joined by others in the course of unfolding events, all of which compete with each other until the very end of the narrative. Toward the close of the novel, events occur for which Gilgi feels personally responsible: the deaths of Hertha, Hans, and their three children. Unaware of the extremity of their circumstances, Gilgi failed to deliver the money that could have saved the family from immediate financial ruin. Consequently, she decides in the closing pages of the novel to have her child and to take on the role of the sole provider as a kind of penance. In contrast, in an inner monologue, Gilgi articulates her decision in terms of the public discourses about responsibility. From now on she will be socially responsible and "do the right thing" (250), meaning she will bear her child as an unmarried woman, and learn her lesson from it.[59] The tragedy that happened to Helga and Hans also functions at this point

[58] See Frevert, page 187, for an overview of the content of the political left's campaign relating to the abolition of § 218.
[59] "das Richtige tun" (250).

as a representation of why Gilgi leaves her irresponsible partner. Gilgi has experienced how destructive a man can be, when his efforts to preserve his family fail.

Read from these perspectives, I propose that Gilgi's decision does not necessarily equate with Weimar's New Woman and the celebration of a shared discourse of German women willing to bear children despite negative circumstances. Rather, this decision can also be understood as a critique of the society that lacks viable choices for pregnant women who lack partners or with partners incapable of functioning as reliable fathers because of their own weaknesses and the contemporaneous job situation.

The available data of this period speaks eloquently to the reluctance of German women to affirm Gilgi's decision to have a child out of wedlock. The statistical evidence confirms that only about 10% of all single pregnant women in the Weimar Republic bore their illegitimate children. As one of that 10%, Gilgi must ignore the realities represented in the novel's multiply voiced discursive representations. These realities are summed up succinctly at the close of the novel. Pit reiterates them as he accompanies Gilgi to the train station: the social stigma of an illegitimate child, the difficulties facing a single mother in finding work and in supporting herself, and the question of what happens should she become ill (257-58).

Arguably the strongest case against an interpretation that would set *Gilgi* apart from *Helene Willfüer*, *Daphne Herbst* and *Das Haus*, is made by the open ending of the novel, the unspoken discourse left to the imagination of the reader about whether Gilgi's

"flight from reality"[60] (262) will succeed against all odds or not. In this novel, Keun has not presented the reader with a single positive image of motherhood for Gilgi to emulate—there is no devoted maternal instinct present here, such as Helene demonstrates in several episodes. Moreover, this heroine's day-to-day experiences with mothers repeatedly provide only negative depictions of dirty, starving children as well as worn out mothers. Keun's language use in describing these situations employs the same linguistic tropes as Baum does, casting the situation of working-class mothers negatively, and not asking if they "loved" the children they could not support. Consequently, by the close of the book, the reader's projection, resulting from encountering a sequence of events and descriptions that together concretize a horizon of expectation about unwed mothers,[61] would at this point predict Gilgi's ultimate failure.

Set against the framework of contemporary discourses on the reproductive choices of women and the era's economic woes, the protagonists' points of view allow all four of the works discussed to critique the negative implications of unwanted pregnancies during the Weimar Republic. While Keun's narrative acknowledges that the decision of whether to have a child or not is a difficult one, the text still implies that by keeping her child despite the poor chance of adequately supporting it, Gilgi may actually be failing to do the right thing. Unlike Willfüer, she has no higher education or career opportunities.

Keun's novel illustrates why such circumstances may well suggest that women's social and moral duty may *not* be to become mothers, regardless of the conditions and

[60] "Flucht vor der Wirklichkeit" (262).
[61] See Iser, *The Act of Reading* 195-212.

against all odds, but rather to act in genuinely socially responsible ways—namely, to avoid having children they will be unable to support. My reading of Keun's novel therefore suggests an addendum to von Ankum's conclusion that through her pregnancy Gilgi has learned to "accept and appreciate the limitations with her female role" (184). Instead, I propose that the author employs Gilgi's acceptance of her role as mother as an invitation to protest the restrictions patriarchal society has imposed on women's reproductive self-determination.

In this sense then, I urge caution in unconditionally viewing *Gilgi—eine von uns* or *Helene Willfüer* as examples of single motherhood or as feminist models of emancipation and liberalization for women. While both novels present two independent female characters taking on the challenge of single motherhood against all odds, allowing them to keep their individual identity and decision-making authority, it was not their choice to become mothers in the first place. Like *Daphne Herbst* and *Das Haus*, *Gilgi* and *Helene Willfüer* portray the main characters making hard decisions as mothers who seek to fall outside the social norms of their class and era. At the same time, all four protagonists share some degree of opposition to having children. Moreover, in every case the negative attitude toward motherhood rests on the protagonists' inability to adequately support their children, financially or morally within the social, political, and economic habitus of the Weimar Republic. In this respect, all four works comment on the limits imposed on women's reproductive freedom by their male-dominated society. However, as a discourse supporting political change, *Gilgi—eine von uns* presents the most explicit attempt of the four novels to protest social conventions and institutions and

their negative impacts on marriage and motherhood. Portraying the married Hertha as "helpless and defenseless"[62] (209), Keun illustrates the problematic situation of many married women, the majority of whom were economically dependent on their husband,[63] and thus unable to escape their spouses' domination. Read this way, even precarious, single motherhood becomes an appealing option for women of Hertha's socioeconomic status in the Weimar Republic.

REPRESENTATIONS OF MOTHERS AND MOTHERHOOD FROM OUTSIDE GERMANY

Turning to contemporary literary representations of women from France and the US, several points of contrast as well as comparisons to the German depictions of women's roles emerge. My objective is to demonstrate that novels originating in other Western nations during the same period offer its female protagonists scripts that diverge from German narratives, and influence subsequent social discourses in their countries in which alternative roles for women in society were discussed in the public sphere, having a lasting effect on these nation's social imaginary.

First, I will look at France, which in many ways shared the devastating wartime experiences Germany had to cope with: the loss of a generation of young men, the postwar economic depression, and resulting changes in the status of and options for women. Not surprising, a number of similar discourses arose in both countries after the

[62] "hilflos und wehrlos" (209).

[63] Frevert points out the economic dependency of wives on their husbands, even when the woman was working. Among other factors she names the considerably lower wages female employees earned, approximately 40% less than their male colleagues (185).

war. With regard to my project, however, I would like to concentrate on a particular commonality: France's, like Germany's official discourses, centered on "the reaffirmation of woman's maternal destiny." The prevalence of this clarion call to motherhood was, according to historian Julian Jackson, "fuelled by male anxieties over the blurring of traditional gender boundaries during the war" (34). In French propaganda, as in Germany, the role of women during the war focused on their nurturing roles. Although, unlike their German peers, the major contribution of French women to the war had been through their factory work, official propaganda during and afterwards portrayed them "allegorically, as 'Marianne' and 'Victory,' or as nurses, wives, and mothers," (Jackson 33). French postwar novels, too, thematized a return to marriage and motherhood, as the following examples will illustrate. Importantly however, the resulting literary representations of French women diverged significantly from those found in the German context by presenting female protagonists who enjoyed more freedom of choice with regard to becoming mothers.

Selling one million copies by the end of the 1920s, sex reformer Victor Margueritte's novel La Garçonne (1922), for instance,[64] tells the story of a young, bourgeois girl who, upon learning that her fiancé is cheating on her, first dissolves the engagement, and then breaks out of the social norms of her class. Monique, the main protagonist, throws herself into a life of frenzied independence, complete with career, taking male as well as female lovers, and becomes the embodiment of a short-haired,

[64] The novel was translated into English as *The Bachelor Girl* and published in 1923 by Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

smoking, and drug-using flapper. Not even the most progressive representation in the German literature of this period portrays such a free-thinking, free-living character. In the model of a bildungsroman, Margueritte's heroine's pursuit of pleasure and adventures brings the middle-class girl no satisfaction in the end. By the close of the novel, she marries and finds fulfillment in caring for a war veteran, and in the sequel of the book, Monique becomes a mother who makes her own identity choices and, when she chooses marriage and children, does so as a full partner in marital decision making.

A similar plot development can be found in Clement Vautel's Madame ne veut pas d'enfants (1924),[65] indicating already in the title that the main protagonist Elyane, although married, does not want to have children. Fearing the loss of her figure and the end of her easy, pleasure-filled life, this autonomous but unemployed middle-class woman simply denies her husband any offspring.[66] Consequently, he begins an affair with a more "traditional" woman. Yet when Elyane discovers her husband is cheating on her, she wants him back because she still loves him, and offers him a baby as reconciliation. Finally, she experiences the joy of motherhood, like the working-class character of Madame Duverger in the novel, a poor mother with six children, whose family nevertheless presents an image of "domestic bliss" (Roberts 131).[67]

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[65] The book was never translated into any other language than Swedish, but was made into several film adaptations, including a silent German (1926) and an Austrian (1933) sound version. While both films were distributed successfully at home and abroad, reaching a large audience, it is significant that the later 1933 version was marketed differently for German viewers. For instance, the title was changed to *Madame wird kinderlieb*, stating the exact opposite of the original, namely that the madam becomes child friendly

[66] French conservatives imposed the most oppressive and rigid penalties for abortions and the use of contraceptives in all of Europe after WWI in reaction to the country's low birthrate,(Roberts 94). However, these laws had seemingly little effect in practice and especially the use of condoms was very common to prevent pregnancies (Roberts 95).

[67] For an in depth discussion of both novels see Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*

While the main protagonists in both narratives, like their German sisters, become mothers in the end, none of the novels presents women defined by their nurturing qualities and a natural disposition for motherhood—rather the opposite is the case. Moreover, throughout the plot lines, the French women are depicted as strong, independent females who not experience subordination or identity loss in relationships to men or marriage. Yet taking up the dominant discourses of their days, both narratives thematize the opposition of its female characters to accept traditional gender roles as result of their quest for self-fulfillment, linking it to irresponsible and selfish behavior.

In contrast to their German peers, however, the portrayed French women who fail to perform established gender roles do not suffer from negative consequences to the same extent. Though at one point, after having an abortion, Monique found herself unable to conceive a child, she later becomes pregnant after deciding that she wants a middle-class lifestyle and giving up her career. With regard to this latter point, this narrative thus shares an important commonality with Helene Willfüer: the incompatibility of work and motherhood. While this topic is not as explicitly dealt with in Vautel's novel, it is nevertheless noteworthy that his heroine Elyane also turns her back on her career. Hence, representations of adult French women, too, exclude images of working middle-class women and foreground them in their social function as mothers. The most significant distinction between Vautel's and Margueritte's novels and their German counterparts is thus that, it is the protagonist's own decision to bear a child, not a burden she was unable to escape from.

In sum, these female literary representations enjoy more freedoms of choice than their peers in neighboring Germany. As a rule, family-oriented narratives do not illustrate or refer to oppressive male behaviors.[68] Nonetheless, in each of these texts, the role of females is restricted to that of the mother, and the period during which middle-class women are able to pursuit a career ends with marriage. Strikingly, and in contrast to the German examples, however, working-class mothers are not presented in an unfavorable light in the French novels. Instead of the clear lines between the "good" mother of the middle class in opposition to those of the upper and working classes that one finds in German narratives of the time, in these sample novels motherhood unites all women. Socioeconomic and educational differences do not result in striking differences in attitudes toward parenting in these French novels about bourgeois women who become mothers.[69]

A popular and later-canonized example from American literature, on the other hand, Edith Wharton's *The Mother's Recompense* (1925), provides a very different mother from either of the notable French and German counterparts. Wharton's novel tells the story of Kate Clephane, [70] an upper-class woman who, after falling in love with a much younger man, walks away from a bad marriage that she associates with captivity

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[68] Of course one can make an argument that this reflects the fact that these novels were written by men, not women as in the case of the German narratives. However, regardless of the social reality, these novels still provided women with alternative scripts other than that of a submissive wife and mother, which I believe is where the true value of these texts lays.

[69] See discussions on representations of motherhood in relation to class in Norman, *The Mother in French Literature* and Jensen, *Uneasy Possessions*.

[70] It is important to note here that Wharton borrowed the title, that she uses ironically for her book from Grace Aguilar's popular novel (1850), which is a "didactic narrative intended to demonstrate the effects of conscientious maternal devotion which has as its reward after all the rebellions that the mother must endure to secure her daughter in a good marriage" (Gavioli 69).

and the loss of her individual identity, leaving not only her husband but also her 3-year-old daughter Anne. Kate has no contact to the child for twenty years, until her mother-in-law, the family matriarch under whose care Anne grew up, dies and the girl is in a position to reestablish ties to her mother. Soon Kate has no time "for anything but motherhood"—she changes "from a self-centered woman, insatiable for personal excitements, into that new being, a mother" (Wharton 104). A challenging situation arises, once her former lover Chris and Anne fall in love and eventually get married. She is then torn between her feelings for Chris and those for her daughter, whom she does not want to lose again. As literary scholar Davida Gavioli notes, Kate faces an irreconcilable dilemma as "to be a mother is to abjure self, and to desire selfhood is to abnegate motherhood" (77). By the close of the novel, Kate thus recognizes she cannot be both mother and herself, yet considers this realization as "the best thing that ever happened to her" (Wharton 342), and leaves for the French Riviera alone. While she loses both her daughter and Chris, Kate finally finds her inner peace. The struggle between what she wants and what society expects from her as a mother is finally over, and a feeling of relief overcomes her.

Like in *Das Haus*, Wharton presents in this story a woman who feels a loss of identity and captivity in marriage. Unlike Andreas-Salomé's character Anneliese, however, Kate, independently wealthy, is able to leave her cage—at the high price of losing her daughter. Accepting this condition, Kate becomes the stereotype of the "bad" and "selfish" upper-class mother who neglects her children in favor of her own interests. Moreover, when Kate gets a second chance years later to make up with Anne, she

abandons the girl again in the end as she is unable to eternally put her daughter's feelings and needs before her own as a "good" mother would do. What stands out in comparison with the German novels is, however, the author's compassionate portrayal of this woman and the way that Wharton frames Kate's hard choices in ways the reader can sympathize with. Wharton's novel, widely discussed at the time of its appearance, stimulated public discourse in newspapers and the public sphere for rethinking the narrow nurturing role American society assigned its female members by denying even women with independent means advanced educational opportunities and gainful employment leading to upward mobility for themselves and their families. The representations in the novel underscore that marriage and family remain the only viable options for women who do not belong to the upper class and even then they have recourse only to amusements on the French Riviera.

In sum, this brief survey of highly visible narratives from other Western nations demonstrates, that, although French and American novels depict women as mothers, too, these main protagonists openly revolt against established gender conventions,[71] which echoes the findings of literary scholars in the fields of French, American, and British literature.[72] Hence, these literary representations provided its contemporary readership, at least to some extent, alternatives to the restricted scripts of adult females inherent in the

[71] While I concentrate on only a few examples, a great many more exist, especially also in British literature. See for instance, the writings of Kay Sinclair, a popular modernist author.

[72] For French literature see Norman, *The Mother in French Literature* and Jensen, *Uneasy Possessions*; for British and American literature see Staub, *The Literary Mother*; for British literature see Rosenman and Klave, *Other Mothers* and Ingman, *Women's Fiction Between the Wars*; for American literature see Cornillon, *Images of Women in Fiction*; Jones, "Mothers of Pearl"; and Weaver, "Mothering and Surrogacy."

German novels. Moreover, whether these figures return to the role society assigns them or not is their choice in the end. Strikingly, however, none of these examples includes the image of a working middle-class woman who successfully combines professional aspirations and motherhood.

SOME CONCLUSIONS: WEIMAR MOTHERS AND "NEW WOMEN"

To conclude, all narratives discussed in this chapter demonstrate a relationship to several contemporaneous discourses. Most importantly for this project, however, is the way these narratives all tie adult females to the role of the mother as the only socially acceptable role for middle-class women at the time. Yet the four literary representations of German women as mothers—in contrast to those found in several popular novels in the French and US context—depict female protagonists as facing only bleak and self-annihilating futures as mothers, with none of the sense of promise exuding from images of Weimar's New Woman so embraced by contemporaneous advertising and today's contemporary critics. To my knowledge, not a single depiction of motherhood exists in German literature dating back to the Weimar era that offers positive representations of independent, working women and their children. Instead, images of helpless, defenseless, and economically dependent women prevail, women unable to care adequately for their children and escape a husband or father's domination or surviving only with the help of a few altruistic men who assist as Good Samaritans.

However, in its own way, each narrative discussed here, whether German or not, also reifies the message that, in particular, middle-class women, unlike their upper-class peers, chose to fulfill their motherly duties, at the expense of their chosen pursuits in a career or personal life—they chose the virtue of the more Victorian bourgeois family outlined by Bachofen a generation earlier, albeit with minor upgrades. Even Vicki Baum's novel *Stud. chem. Helene Willfüer,* praised as a new model for women by contemporaries and recent literary critics, shares this characteristic choice. As soon as the novels' protagonists marry and establish families of their own, however, they give up their professional aspirations. This holds true even for Gilgi, who gives up her work as a typist and drops out of the Berlitz School as soon as she gets involved with the later father of her child. Simultaneously, working mothers of the middle class, like the rare example of Helene Willfüer underscores, are portrayed as *Rabenmütter,* neglecting their children for selfish ambitions.

Consequently, these contemporary novels with their emphases on middle-class women as nurturing and self-sacrificing mothers serve as examples of the socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned ways German women can be "spoken of." Operating beneath the consciousness of their readers, these texts restrict the system of conceptual possibilities for what is thinkable and acceptable for bourgeois women in the Weimar Republic and beyond.[73] In doing so, these narratives thus not only reflect, but

[73] For instance, in 1983 the popular German women's magazine *Brigitte,* rediscovered and recommended Vicki Baum's novel for its readers (Boge 91).

also contribute to the larger, hegemonic discourse restricting the identities of adult females in Germany's social imaginary.

In short, while these novels can be—and often have been—dismissed as *Trivialliteratur* supporting feminist ideals, I have made the case that they are cultural artifacts in the sense of Michel Foucault (*Archeology of Knowledge*), containing verifiable historical, social, and political messages about social conditions. Supporting this view, historian Cornelie Usborne attributes the lack of attention critics paid to these books in the past to the fact that the "full extent of the emancipatory or subversive messages is not immediately obvious and has to be detected outside the explicit storyline" ("Rebellious Girls and Pitiable Women" 334). Yet the findings of her 2005 study of fictional abortion narratives in Weimar popular culture demonstrate that these stories frequently challenged dominant views and discourses. The same can be said about the novels I discuss in this chapter—each of which simultaneously embraces and critiques the nuclear family without overtly suggesting new social orders, such as appealing daycare centers and opportunities of parental caretaking leaves while employed.

In reversing the discourse on what it means to act in a socially responsible way, these German novels often proposed the idea that women's social and moral duty may *not* be to become mothers under such negative social and economic circumstances. This message, however, in contrast to France for instance, was never taken up as part of public discourse in Weimar's media or political framework. With the end of the Weimar Republic and the beginning of the Third Reich, National Socialists then rapidly censured

these works. The underlying critical and feminist tones in the works by Baum, Kolb, Andreas-Salomé, and Keun were judged *undesirable* and for that reason their novels were banned.[74]

Ironically, it was the National Socialists who responded to the issues raised in these four authors' representations of motherhood: the need for governmental support and improved living conditions for German mothers and children. The Nazi party found strong supporters in the many German mothers with families who were hungry, women unable to find work, and who had to bring up their children largely without support. In the following chapter I will illustrate, how the Nazis capitalized on these as well as on the other topics discussed in this chapter, recasting motherhood into a prestigious social status for women who chose to become "the mothers of the fatherland." Establishing a variety of welfare programs (e.g., Mutter und Kind, Winterhilfswerk, Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt) and community initiatives, in its early years, National Socialism clothed itself in the guise of a comparatively benevolent father, and a social-support model for other nations that suffered during the depression of the 1930s.[75]

[74] Although Baum was originally Jewish, the primary reason her works were banned, which was also the case for those by Andreas-Salomé, Kolb, and Keun, was that they were supposedly detrimental to the "moral rejuvenation" the National Socialists tried to achieve with their literary politics (Strothmann 229). For more details on the individual reasons these books were forbidden, see Strothmann, *Nationalsozialistische Literaturpolitik*

[75] See, for instance, "Adolf Hitler: Man of the Year, 1938."

Chapter 3: The Literary Mothers of the Fatherland

With the beginning of the Third Reich, the narratives about women's roles as mothers changed radically, compared to those found in the Weimar Republic. These changes were manifested in laws, policies, and public perceptions about women's status. In this era's most visible literary representations, the female protagonists were portrayed as experiencing a higher degree of autonomy, ostensibly leading to social conditions that would enable lasting, positive changes for mothers and their children under the protection of the Third Reich. Unlike their Weimar sisters, under National Socialist dictates for narratives, women in historical and more contemporary contexts are depicted as able to support themselves and their children without the help from men. Yet as my analysis will demonstrate, these "new" images of motherhood presented to a large readership were first and foremost intended to serve the interest of the state, not individual women's opportunities for self-realization.

To trace what this shift implied for the (largely female) readers of this fiction, this chapter provides a survey of widely read novels to illustrate ways in which the Third Reich's authors portrayed adult females as strong individuals who openly rebel against misguided patriarchs. However, although main characters enjoy considerably more decision-making authority and independence from men and the bias toward marriage

vanishes, as we shall see, the underlying ideology of women's *raison d'être* remains largely untouched: motherhood remains the only *desirable* option for adult women, even if necessity suggests new roles for them that the regime needed to acknowledge. The era's bestsellers therefore are remarkable in how they negotiate the space between official party lines and the necessities of history purportedly forced onto Germany and its women.

In Ina Seidel's historical novel *Das Wunschkind* (1930), for instance, the heroine is a widow, who as a single mother raises her son and oversees a large estate her son will inherit, but only after she has successfully taken over control from her own father.[1] Similarly, in Josefa Berens-Totenohl's peasant novel *Der Femhof* (1934) and its sequel *Frau Magdalene* (1935), the female protagonist brings up her son alone because his father, as in *Das Wunschkind*, dies before the child is born. She, too, manages the family farm until her son is an adult. Both novels stress that these mothers possess not only the personal characteristics and competencies necessary to organize a household, but also to run a business, managing their property and its capital successfully without accepting the

[1] Although Seidel's book was published during the Weimar Republic, I chose to include the work here for two reasons. First, it became a bestseller only after the Weimar era ended, and because it was, in essence, a novel that suited the Nazi ideology. In doing so, I follow the example of literary scholar Karl-Heinz Schoeps, who maintains in his classification of attributes reflect a novel's status as being exemplary for the Third Reich, that it makes no difference whether a novel was "already written before Hitler's official seizure of power in 1933. Decisive is only the ideology expressed in the novels and the fact that several editions and many thousands of copies of the novels were distributed in the period from 1933 to 1945 and reached a large segment of the reading public" (69). On this note, I would also like to add that I focus in this chapter exclusively on narrative dating to the 1930s not because no later depictions of mothers exist, but rather because those later novels have not enjoyed the same large readership. My second, but equally important reason to include Seidel in this chapter is that the author, an outspoken supporter of National Socialism, glorifies in her novel the role of women as mothers to an extent that no other work of this period does, and in doing so serves as model for later literary representations of motherhood embracing Nazi ideology, as Annette Kliewer has demonstrated in her article "Die Mutter als 'Wurzel der Gemeinschaft': Ina Seidels 'Wunschkind' als Wende zum NS-Mutterroman."

guidance of, or intervention from men.

At the same time, however, the narratives emphasize that mothers are the only people capable of securing a positive upbringing for children. In contrast to the mothers portrayed in Weimar novels, who have the insights but not the means or authority to influence their children's upbringing, the mothers who raise their children in accordance with the tenets of the Nazi party, experience male support. This also applies to Otto Flake's *Die Töchter Noras* (1934), with Flake's protagonist, a widower, who must reject any number of unworthy bourgeois candidates before finding his ideal in a Nazi mother to better raise his son.

The focus on independent women as mothers of sons instead of females oppressed by patriarchal family structures is not surprising from today's point of view, given our insights into the history of the Third Reich. The dominant figure of the Third Reich was Hitler, not the family patriarch,[2] and his leadership called for complete compliance. To contextualize, most literary works of the 1930s depicted the sociopolitical, economic, and legal circumstances conditioning those discourses that represented the rewards stemming from adherence to Nazi ideals. Hitler's law was the ultimate law of the fathers who were physically missing, but morally present for these women and their minor male children. The subsequent section of this chapter thus will examine these broader factors that contributed to representations of motherhood in this era, before I turn to the novels themselves.

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[2] Unmarried and without children of his own, Hitler was actually the exact opposite of the family patriarch, a "failed" father figure so to say. Yet perhaps this was a trait that particularly worked to his benefit in attracting both male and female followers, particularly among Germany's youth. Compared to the established figures of authority, Hitler was a novelty, offering a new beginning for Germany.

OVERVIEW OF NAZI GERMANY'S ECONOMIC, SOCIOPOLITICAL, AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Commencing in 1933, National Socialist dictates with regard to women's rights and social position created a curiously anomalous mixture of legal measures reflecting traditional, modernist, and regressive influences. The effort to encourage women to assume their "natural" role as mothers of as many children as possible resulted in an extensive state support system of fiscal rewards for mothers. Incentives introduced in 1933 commenced with interest-free loans given to young married couples under the condition that the wife give up her job, and, as an alternative to paying back the loan, the state offered the option that "with each child the debt decreased by a quarter, with the result that with the birth of the fourth child a couple had 'paid off' their debt" (Frevert 230).[3] The Nazi government also supported preexisting large families through various forms of financial assistance and tax advantages.[4] Besides monetary benefits, solely symbolic honorary awards such as the Mutterkreuz (Cross of Honor of the German Mother) were presented during public ceremonies on Mother's Day to especially

[3] The loan amount of up to 1,000 Reichsmarks was about 2/3 of the annual average income of a wage-earner in 1933. For women, who earned considerably less than men, this sum often times superseded their total income of more than a year, hence, this offer seemed appealing to a great number of people (Frevert 230).

[4] One of the financial assistance programs was the precursor of Germany's current *Kindergeld*, a monthly benefit paid per child. During National Socialism the amount roughly equaled 5% of a worker's monthly income. For more details see Frevert 230.

reproductive mothers,[5] praising their significance for the country's future.

Additional laws and agencies supported mothers with a variety of state-run measures. To make motherhood easier and more attractive, a network of welfare provisions was established with the Reichsmütterdienst (Reich's Mothers' Service). Founded in 1934, the Reichsmütterdienst assisted mothers in ways, ranging from organized trips and holidays for women and their children to training courses of how to be a *good* mother (Frevert 233). By 1944, about five million German women had attended at least one of these courses, in which mothers-to-be learned "how to run a household in a businesslike and efficient manner, design a comfortable home, care properly for infants and bring up children in a responsible manner" (Frevert 233).

In addition, as historian Jill Stephenson points out, 25,000 nationwide "Mutter und Kind" counseling centers offered information on all matters relating to childcare, ranging from how to cook nutritious meals to how to give immunizations.[6] By 1938 almost ten million women had already sought help in these centers (45). These services were largely offered by middle-class women who instructed young factory and office workers in what they believed "proper mothers" needed to know (Frevert 234). Hence, the Reichsmütterdienst promoted not only ideas about raising healthy children under National Socialism, but also facilitated a transfer of bourgeois values regarding the role of mothers. However, while middle-class women gave domestic advice on how to view

[5] While Mother's Day has been celebrated in Germany since 1923, it only became an official German holiday in 1933.

[6] In addition to counselors, these centers had nurses and doctors on staff, providing well-child checks and pediatric care. Compared with the Weimar era, access to health care for children, who were not covered under a worker's health insurance, thus dramatically improved.

the mother and house-manager role as a fulfilling lifetime career, monetary need forced women of the working and lower middle classes to combine paid employment with their family duties (Frevert 234). Rather than encouraging women to be stay-at-home parents, then, the reality by 1939 was that more than a third of married women fell under the category of working mothers, two million more than in 1933.[7]

In other words, although contradictory to the Nazi ideal of woman promoted in official discourse—the mother devoted solely to her family—lawmakers and public policies promoted (*had* to promote) combining motherhood with gainful employment. A significant indicator of the importance of that combination was the 1934 expansion of the Weimar Mutterschutzgesetz (Mother Protection Law). The revision restricted the number of hours pregnant women could work and granted working mothers six weeks of paid maternity leave before and after the birth of their children (Stephenson 97). In addition, members of the NS-Frauenschaft (National Socialist women's organization) replaced female factory workers with large families for an additional three to six weeks,[8] so these women could have more time off with pay (Frevert 226). Through these and other measures, the Nazi state supported the well-being of women and children before and after giving birth.[9] Then, once mothers returned to work, their children were cared for in free day nurseries and crèches (Frevert 225). Further assistance to mothers of large families was also provided from 1934 onward by teenage girls, who completed their mandatory

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[7] See Frevert 218.

[8] Interestingly, these replacement workers often were female university students, underscoring the idea of a classless society (Stephenson 96-97).

[9] Another example of such a measure was the introduction of the Midwife Law, which granted every mother-to-be the right to call a midwife, a great relief especially for poor women who previously could not afford this service (Stevenson 45).

six months of domestic service (later one year, known as the *Pflichtjahr* or "year of duty") to help with household chores (Frevert 227-29). Combining work and motherhood in this fashion indeed made life easier for working mothers and their children.

Another effort to increase birthrates was launched with a campaign declaring a couple should only marry for love.[10] Nazi officials posited "that a loving couple would be more likely to provide a stable home, and, so it was thought, many children" (Stevenson 41). This belief confirms historian Dagmar Herzog's claim that there were multiple relationships between sexuality and other kinds of politics in the Third Reich, often associated with a number of liberating effects for Aryan Germans.[11] Related to this idea, in 1934 the one-party Nazi parliament made their first priority a revision of divorce law, a gesture which was nothing short of revolutionary at that time (Stephenson 42). Wilhelmine marriage law had privileged the husband's financial and parental control (Koonz 191-92), and while this contingency did not change, party officials believed that making divorces uncomplicated and more accessible, especially to women, would lead to more remarriages. As Ute Frevert notes, and along the lines of Herzog's research, in contrast to Weimar conservatives who viewed "a high divorce rate as evidence of a widespread crisis of the family, the National Socialists saw it as the opportunity for new families to be created" (237).[12] Ironically, this new divorce policy reflected demands that had been made by many women's organizations during the Weimar era.

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[10] See "The Ten Commandments for Choosing a Partner" in Koonz 189, and see Stevenson 41.

[11] See Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fachism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*

[12] Interestingly, as Stevenson points out, the majority of divorces filed under the new law dissolved marriages that had been contracted on average twenty or more years earlier (43), that is, the often arranged and oppressive marriages of the Wilhelmine era from which women previously could not escape.

This same claim can be made about policies strengthening the position of single mothers. Laws were instituted making it illegal to dismiss female employees for having illegitimate children and provided homes as well as large, onetime cash awards for unmarried mothers.[13] Hence, although the bourgeoisie continued to ostracize these women and their illegitimate children (Frevert 238), the overall situation for single mothers improved dramatically, allowing them to care for their children without suffering the onus of dependency on a family or friend-based support system. In sum, the Nazi state provided help for all women with children through its multiple organizations, offering advice, financial aid, and a variety of social services.

In consequence, despite numerous verbal assurances of party leaders to the contrary, the emancipation of German mothers made significant progress during the Nazi period. And contrary to conventional wisdom, this same claim can be made for German women in general during the Nazi era. Viewed in the light of public representation versus political actuality, all the law and policy changes discussed above make political sense, as the Nazis' intention was not, as often claimed, to "free" women completely from employment (Stephenson 85). They did not prevent girls from getting a university education,[14] nor ban them from professional careers as architects, doctors, and even

[13] See Stephenson page 45 for details on homes for single mothers, page 63 on tax reliefs, and page 69 on cash awards as well as legal positions, ensuring the same social benefits to any mother, whether married or not.

[14] That is, as long as they came from an Aryan racial background and were neither feminist bluestockings nor bourgeois girls only interested in the student lifestyle (Stephenson 140-43). Also, in spite of the Nazi view that some subjects, like the natural sciences, were less suitable to women, female students were actually better represented in the medical and science faculties than in the arts (Stephenson,168).

professors.[15] Moreover, hundreds of thousands of women were appointed to positions of leadership in various low- and mid-level state organizations, fulfilling duties ranging from ideological and political development to financial management; they exercised power over subordinates (male and female) and millions of citizens,[16] and they also played a crucial role in the Holocaust.[17]

Although women were still excluded from military and high-ranking political positions, on the whole they enjoyed greater involvement in public life and recognition for their work than ever before in German history (Frevert 241). Moreover, as leaders, these women represented figures of authority in a society that heretofore had relegated them to exclusively supportive roles. Even older teenage girls as leading members of the Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls) exercised power over younger girls—and, consequently, in that respect over these girls' parents as well (Koonz 195). Moreover, such youth organizations provided girls with "at least temporary escape from the restrictions and duties that typified [class-bound] female socialization" (Frevert 244). The old (bourgeois) social order with women as a *naturally* suppressed class thus came to an end during the Nazi period, opening up positive alternatives to the female members of German society.

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[15] For instance, in fall 1938 Dr. Maria Lipp was promoted to the Chair of Chemistry at the technical university of Aachen, the first woman in German history to have been appointed professor at a technical university (Stephenson 176-77).

[16] See for instance the case of Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the *Reichsfrauenführerin*, extensively discussed in Koonz, along with numerous other examples of women holding offices and positions of power in the Third Reich.

[17] See Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*.

The caveat about any claims for the Third Reich as a woman's—and mother's—paradise is that it was available only to women considered Aryan and politically correct. The Nazi regime had no tolerance for female individuals who did not fulfill the racial, social, and political requirements[18] necessary to produce healthy, racially "pure" children (Frevert 234-37). Another excluded group were those women who lacked the ability or the willingness to bear children and were stigmatized by the state.[19] Further repressions must also be noted: after seizing power, new legislation introduced harsher punishments for facilitators of abortion (a possible death sentence), closed family planning centers, and made contraceptives extremely difficult to obtain (Stephenson 61-62).

In sum, like in the Weimar Republic, a woman's *raison d'être* in the Nazi state was ultimately to become a mother. Yet although in respect to family planning, the situation of some women regressed, if Aryan and willing to bear children and support state policies, women gained more financial and social support. Mothers in particular enjoyed a higher degree of autonomy due to the financial and sociopolitical inducements for parenting.[20]

In the next section I will briefly outline shared representations of Nazi Germany's sociopolitical, economic, and structural fields and discursive space, all of which influenced representations of motherhood in the Third Reich.

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[18] Examples of such "inferior" women include, for instance, Jews, Sinti and Roma, but also alcoholics. Along these lines, the Mutterkreuz was thus not awarded to all women with numerous children, but only to the "worthy ones" (Weyrather, *Muttertag und Mutterkreuz*).

[19] Husbands of infertile wives were actually urged to divorce their spouses and remarry women who could bear children (Stephenson 42).

[20] According to Koonz this is the result of the establishment of two separate spheres for women and men during the Third Reich (419).

STATE-APPROVED REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN'S LIVES

The three novels that will be treated in this chapter are by Ina Seidel (1888-1974), Josefa Berens-Totenohl (1891-1969), and Otto Flake (1880-1963). Although these authors come from slightly different backgrounds, as writers they all address similar audiences, and their novels share state-approved representations of Nazi Germany's party line with regard to the social realities of that time. During the Third Reich, as we shall see, the publishers' control over a novel's content and publication process was relinquished in favor of National Socialist ideology.

The author of the first novel to be examined, Ina Seidel (1885-1974), was the third of five children in an affluent bourgeois Protestant family from Braunschweig. Her subject matter focuses on the expectations and behaviors of people at the upper edges of the middle class with whom she grew up.[21] When her surgeon father committed suicide based on falsified accusations of malpractice,[22] Seidel's sheltered childhood came to an abrupt end. Her mother moved with her children to Munich, where Seidel spent her formative years and enjoyed a university education. However, at age twenty-two she gave up her career as a teacher, and married her cousin, the pastor and writer Wolfgang Seidel (Gehler 148). She gave birth to a daughter a year later, but suffered from a childbirth infection that left her physically disabled for the rest of her life (Gehler 148). She began

[21] Throughout her life, Seidel remained especially close to her younger sister Annemarie, who first was in a relationship with Carl Zuckermayer and later married Peter Suhrkamp (Krusche 11).
[22] For more details on Seidel's biography see Gehler 148-53 and Krusche 11-18.

to write and to establish longtime friendships with fellow writers Agnes Miegel and Lulu von Strauß und Torney,[23] the wife of publisher Eugen Diederichs (Krusche 12).[24] The bulk of Seidel's first published poems and songs thematized the mother-child relationship (Gehler 149). With the beginning of the first World War, however, Seidel's poetic themes shifted to the glorification of war, encouraging perseverance, even after Germany's defeat appeared inevitable (Gehler 150).[25] Her most popular novel, *Das Wunschkind* (1930), was read predominantly by educated women of the middle class (Krusche 16). It integrates both war and motherhood, reflecting the later core historical issues of the Third Reich, namely women's roles as mothers of future soldiers and as women who can manage to raise their children without husbands.

In *Das Wunschkind*, the female protagonist, Cornelie, is a Prussian aristocrat who accompanies her soldier husband back to his birth place Mainz at the onset of the War of the First Coalition in 1792. The night before her husband leaves for the front, Cornelie, whose young son had died that same day, foresees that her spouse will also die in battle, leaving her alone. Hence she seduces him, wishing to become pregnant with a son once more. Nine months later, still mourning the death of her husband, she bears her child Christoph, *das Wunschkind*. This melodramatic opening of a more than 1000-page novel sets the tone for what unfolds: the story of a mother who successfully raises her son alone

[23] According to Gehler, Lulu von Strauß und Torney and Josefa Berens-Totenohl were among the group of authors, who most openly supported Nazism with their works (43).
[24] The Eugen Diederichs publishing house became, according to literary scholar Ortrun Niethammer, one of the most influential publishers from 1933 to 1945, focusing on "Germanic" themed literature. Its authors were primarily female, reflecting the publishing house's tradition as an outlet for women's literature (102).
[25] As Niethammer documents in her study, the author's stance toward the end of World War II was similar, as she still believed "an die Unbesiegbarkeit der deutschen Waffen," and a possible German victory in 1945 (111).

during wartime, equal to a great many challenges, including fighting her own father, who blames her for the death of his favorite daughter Charlotte and who, as a result, had disowned Cornelie.

Despite having been disinherited, Cornelie returns to Prussia with Christoph, who in the end will be accepted by her father as the rightful heir to his estate. Her return to Prussia is prompted by the death of her mother-in-law, for whom Cornelie had cared during a long illness. With her return to Prussia, Cornelie takes control over the estate, and under her administration, the formerly neglected farm flourishes again. Christoph has a bright future, but like his father and grandfather before him, he is destined to become a soldier and die on the battlefield. Cornelie converts to Catholicism, viewing Christoph's death as the sacrifice a mother has to accept for the greater good of the German nation.[26] According to Seidel, her book thus "wants to be a tree, which a German mother has planted in the name of uncountable sisters, to honor and remember fallen German sons."[27]

The critical reception of *Das Wunschkind* was very positive from the day of its publication until decades later, with critics calling it a "great, timeless woman's novel."[28] Reviewers praised Seidel's style, calling her the female counterpart to Thomas Mann, and in 1932 she even became the second female member of the Preußische Akademie der

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[26] As Niethammer points out, in contrast to the works of Käthe Kollwitz, for instance, Seidel's novel does not portray mourning or wailing women, but instead female characters who show greatness when losing their husbands and sons (103).

[27] The German original, published in Seidel's essay "Über die Entstehung meines Romans 'Das Wunschkind,'" reads "daß es ein Baum sein will, den eine deutsche Mutter im Namen unzähliger Schwestern zur Ehre und zum Gedächtnis gefallenerr deutscher Söhne gepflanzt hat" (190).

[28] See "Zum 65. Geburtstag der Dichterin Ina Seidel."

Künste (Krusche 16). However, between 1930 and 1932, fewer than 50,000 copies of the novel sold. The book became a bestseller only after 1933,[29] in no small part due to the extensive marketing efforts of the novel as an example of "good" *völkisch* literature.

An ad placed on the title page of the *Börsenblatt des deutschen Buchhandels* in fall 1934 by the book's publisher, the Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, proclaimed that the *unanimous* opinion of leading retail booksellers was that Seidel's work would dominate Christmas book sales (Adam 262). To support this prediction, the publishing house offered a multitude of free advertising materials to book stores, ranging from decorative posters for shop windows to flyers (Adam 262). These marketing efforts proved successful, not only in 1934, but continuously thereafter. By 1944, nine new editions of *Das Wunschkind* had been printed, with 440,000 copies sold.[30] Ina Seidel became a household name. In fact, based on the book's popularity, Victor Klemperer decided to read it (Adam 262).[31] In his diary Klemperer noted that, in 1944, he had wanted to read Seidel's work, because as a bestseller with more than 400,000 copies sold, it would have to be characteristic of its time. After reading the novel, Klemperer then indeed finds the narrative representative—a novel that is "enormously characteristic for blood

[29] A brochure distributed by the publisher Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart advertised printing the fiftieth thousand in 1933. By 1944, nine new editions of *Das Wunschkind* had been printed, with 440,000 copies sold. See Bestand Ina Seidel, Grey Folder X: Seidel, Ina: "Verlagsmitteilungen," Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach.

[30] See Barbian 65.

[31] Victor Klemperer kept up a diary throughout the Nazi period, which provides an exceptional account of day-to-day life during the Third Reich, especially regarding the treatment of Jews like Klemperer. Moreover, this diary served as the basis for Klemperer's groundbreaking postwar book *LTI—Lingua Tertii Imperii: Notizbuch eines Philologen*, a linguistic analysis of how National Socialist propaganda altered the German language to inculcate people with Nazi ideology.

romanticism, for the relation romanticism-materialism-race-tribe" (Adam 262), [32]and also particularly for the widely proclaimed National Socialist view of the relationship between motherliness, blood, and soil (Adam 263).

Remarkably, literary scholar Eva-Maria Gehler still does not count Seidel among authors supporting Nazi ideology (43), although most recent critics do so.[33] Even though the critic admits in her conclusion that Seidel contributes with her work to the glorification of battle and the sacrifices women have to make during wartime—that is to accept the death of father, husband, or son without complaint, while preparing the next generation of sons to become soldiers and daughters for their role as future mothers. Nonetheless, Gehler attributes Seidel's worldview to romanticism, not Nazism (193). She writes that, while Seidel believed in Hitler as kind of savior (198), a conviction that led her to sign the "Gelöbnis treuester Gefolgschaft," together with 88 other German authors in 1933 (201), the author did not approve of Nazi politics. This assertion echoes Seidel's own statements after 1945 concerning what she viewed as judgmental errors due to a lack of political education. The author wrote that she had neither understood Hitler's politics, nor the role her writing had played in promoting Nazi ideology (Adam 265). However, while Seidel's political intentions might remain debatable, without a doubt the Nazis capitalized on her work.

Despite her prominence as a writer during the Third Reich, with the help of her brother-in-law Peter Suhrkamp, Seidel was still able to publish after 1945, and the

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[32] The German original reads "ungeheuer charakertristisch für die Blutromantik, für die Relation Romantik- Materialismus-Rasse-Sippe" (Adam 262).

[33] See Hesse, *Ina Seidel. Eine Literatin im Nationalsozialismus*, in which multiple scholars agree that Seidel supported National Socialism, in person as well as in her writing.

popularity of *Das Wunschkind* continued well into the second half of the twentieth century, reaching a total of 1.2 million sold books by 1985.[34] Ranging from editions marketed in the Bertelsmann Lesering to Ullstein pocket books, *Das Wunschkind*, thus enjoyed a large documented readership for more than five decades (Gehler 154), something only few German-language books ever achieve. No other contemporary author thematizing the role of women in society had the same potential influence on such a broad audience. For that reason, this work readily serves as the centerpiece novel for any discussion of Nazi Germany's discourses on women as mothers.

After WWII, Seidel also published new successful novels [35] and continued to receive literary prizes for her work.[36] As such a well-known author, German newspapers consistently mentioned her birth anniversaries,[37] even after her death, and ZDF aired a TV special commemorating her centennial.

Although never reaching audiences comparable to *Das Wunschkind*, another prominent writer of the Nazi era writing about similar themes was also representative of

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[34] See Bestand Ina Seidel, correspondence between Dieter Luippold, PR representative of the Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart, and Hilke Holinka, dating to July 10,ˈ1985. Grey Folder Handschriften A: Deutsche Verlagsanstallt, "Verschiedenes / Verlagsnotizen über Seidel, Ina." Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach.

[35]As Hans Sarkowicz points out, Germany saw two literary bestsellers in 1959: Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and Ina Seidel's *Michaela*. The latter sold 40,000 copies within a couple weeks of its publications, while Günter Grass's *Blechtrommel*, on the other hand sat, on the shelves. Hence, the writer Seidel continued to be present and very visible in the area of cultural production (Sarkowicz 165).

[36] For instance, Seidel was awarded Der große Kunstpreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen in 1959 (Niethammer, 109).

[37] As a survey of newspaper articles I conducted at the DLA Marbach in summer 2014 revealed, local as well as national German newspapers, ranging from the *Schwarzwälder Bote* to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* never missed publishing an article on Seidel's significant birthdays, even after her death. Moreover, these articles always included a reference to *Das Wunschkind*. See Bestand Ina Seidel, Green Box "Zeitungsausschnittsammlung der Mediendokumentation. Seidel, Ina. Mappe 2" Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach.

Nazi ideology about women: Josefa Berens-Totenohl. Born in 1891, Berens-Totenohl grew up as the child of a blacksmith in the small country village of Grevenstein, Westphalia.[38] Her mother died during childbirth, and her father later remarried a widow with seven children. In contrast to her stepmother and father, who failed to detect the young girl's artistic talent, Berens-Totenohl was encouraged and supported by her grandfather, the local priest, and her teacher to leave the village and pursue a career (Niethammer104),[39] which enabled her to escape the poverty of her home.[40] She moved to Düsseldorf, where she became a painter and a writer. However, the young woman experienced big city life as very negative and frightening, later thematizing in her writing the Nazi's proclaimed distaste for the metropolitan city and contrasting it with the healthy alternative of village and country life, nature, and *Heimat* (106).[41] Another central element embedded in Berens-Totenohl's novels is the role of women in society, which she sees first and foremost as that of the mother.[42] The following plot summary illustrates how her peasant novel *Der Femhof* (1934) and its sequel *Frau Magdalene* (1935) combine both motifs.

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[38] For further details on Berens-Totenohl's biography, see Niethammer, "Holocaust und Gedähtnis," Gehler, 89-90, and Berens-Totental's biography online at "Internet Portal Westfälische Geschichte," http://www.lwl.org/westfaelische-geschichte/portal/Internet/finde/langDatensatz.php?urlID=694&url_tabelle=tab_person.

[39] Interestingly, it was the priest who suggested she remain unmarried to further keep her independence (Niethammer 104).

[40] See "Internet Portal Westfälische Geschichte"

[41] Based on the topic choices, literary scholar Eva-Maria Gehler thus classifies Berens-Totenohl as one of the authors the Nazi government successfully utilized for its propaganda purposes (Gehler 41). Yet Gehler demonstrates in her comparison of female authors writing in Nazi Germany, that Berens-Totenohl's peasant narratives supported the Nazi's ideology not only through blood-and-soil motives, but also its antisemitic (50) and racial undertones, especially the negative portrayal of Sinti and Roma (66).

[42] In her work *Die Frau als Schöpferin und Erhalterin des Volkstums*, Berens-Totenohl strongly supports the official Nazi ideology restricting the role of women to that of the mother as guarantor of a healthy and strong people.

Der Femhof is set in the upper Lenne Valley of the Sauerland around the middle of the fourteenth century. Against this backdrop, the action centers on the formerly strong Wulf clan. In an effort to maintain power and social status, the Wulf patriarch arranges an advantageous marriage for his daughter Magdalene, his only child, with Erik, heir to the prosperous Stadeler farm. However, the girl is in love with Ulrich, a man who once saved her life, but who now is employed as a hired hand after having lost his own farm (and thus social status) when he killed a nobleman in self-defense. Magdalene stands up to her father, explains her feelings for Ulrich, and refuses to marry Erik. Unwilling to accept his daughter's decision to marry out of her own class, her father drives Ulrich from the farm. At the same time, Erik, in an act of revenge due to Magdalene's rejection of his marriage proposal, calls the *Feme* court, framing Ulrich's act of self-defense as the murder of an aristocrat. While Ulrich plans to turn himself in to fight for his innocence, Magdalene insists on spending the night with him before he does so. Her father tracks the couple down and kills Ulrich in a mad rage, a deed he later regrets and which leads to his mental breakdown. On the last page of *Der Femhof*, then, the reader learns that Magdalene is pregnant and that the farm flourishes again under her management, as it will continue to do later under her son—all of which is depicted in the sequel, *Frau Magdalene*.

Berens-Totenohl's narratives thus share a significant commonality with *Das Wunschkind*: both daughters rebel against their fathers, raise their own sons without husbands, and manage the family estates alone. Contemporary reviewers praised these German women for their strength and the bravery they exhibited by taking control of

their lives. [43] These brave, strong female characters appealed not only to critics,[44] but also to a large documented readership. *Der Femhof* and *Frau Magdalene* were among the most widely distributed books in the Third Reich. As documented in reader reception studies, they appealed primarily to working- and middle-class audiences.[45] By 1942, a total of almost a half million copies of *Der Femhof* and *Frau Magdalene* had been printed and sold (Schonauer 89), and a survey of public libraries reveals that in 1938 her novels were the most frequently checked-out books in small and medium-sized towns.[46] Moreover, although Berens-Totenohl was an early and outspoken proponent of Nazism and her works were classified as supporting Nazi ideology,[47] her books also remained popular even after 1945.[48] However, after a new generation of authors confronted the writer with her role as supporter of National Socialist ideas at the Westfälisches Dichtertreffen in 1956, Berens-Totenohl completely withdrew from the public sphere and was subsequently forgotten—at least by literary scholars.

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[43] In Wilhelm Westeder's book review of *Frau Magdalene,* the reviewer calls the protagonist "eine starke Frau, ... noch stäker als der Vater, dieser harte, unerbittliche Mann." Moreover, the word brave "tapfer" is attributed to the protagonist's attitude in coping with all the strokes of fate she has to endure, that the critic praised as "eine alte Germanische Auffassung. Sie ist in der neuen Literatur kaum irgendwo so rein dargestellt worden wie bei Josefa Berens-Totenohl."

[44] As Christian Adam demonstrates in his book, *Lesen unter Hitler: Autoren, Bestesller, Leser im Dritten Reich*, all influential critics of professional literary journals from *Bücherkunde* to *Zeitschrift der Leihbücherei* recommended Berens-Totenohl's works (289).

[45] See Gehler 40 and Adam 288.

[46] See "Internet Portal Westfälische Geschichte".

[47] See "Internet Portal Westfälische Geschichte" and Gehler, 89-90.

[48] A combined edition of *Der Femhof* and *Frau Magdalene* was published under the title *Die Leute vom Femhof* by Diederichs in 1957 and later reprinted in 1961. In a personal letter to Berens-Totenohl, written on March 8, 1962 by her publisher Niels Diederichs, he praises the sales of the reprint, which he considers astonishing for a book that has been on the market for decades. He states "There are not many books that enjoy such a long life." See Bestand Josefa Berens-Totenohl, correspondece in Grey Folder Handschriften, HS.2009.0024, Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach.

Otto Flake, the last author to be discussed in this chapter, is likewise forgotten by scholars today. The son of a Lutheran lower-ranked civil servant and a farmer's daughter was born in 1880 in Metz and studied philosophy, art history, and German at the University of Strassburg, before working as a private teacher.[49] However, his marriage to a wealthy Jewish girl (the first of five marriages) in 1911 brought him financial independence and allowed him to enjoy the carefree upper-class lifestyle he always had dreamed of until his death in 1963,[50] Flake continuously wrote and published novels. Reflecting the author's own difficult relationships with women, including his mother,[51] Flake's works frequently depicted the problems in male and female relationships, which he viewed as grounded in women's emancipation.[52]

His novel *Die Töchter Noras* (1934) for instance, was written from the perspective of the widower Faber Arnold, its main protagonist, who is looking for another wife and mother to better raise his young son. However, the women Arnoldi meets in his social circle or who answer his personal advertisements all turn out to be unworthy because they do not want to give up their professional aspirations for marriage,

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[49] For details on Flake's life, see his autobiography *Es wird Abend: Bericht aus einem langen Leben*; Michael Farin, *Annäherungen an einen Eigensinnigen*; and Sabine Graf, *Als Schriftsteller leben: Das publizistische Werk Otto Flakes der Jahre 1900 bis 1933 zwischen Selbstverständigung und Selbstinszenierung.*

[50] Flake was married five times, and each time he picked another wealthy woman to finance his expensive lifestyle. His last wife Marianna even had to pay off his debt as a precondition for getting married (Flake, *Es wird Abend* 408).

[51] After his father committed suicide in response to gambling debts, Flake's mother had to earn a living and raise her son and daughter alone (Flake, *Es wird Abend* 15). Interestingly, Flake accuses his "vollbeschäftigte Mutter" who did not remarry, of not devoting enough time to her children and blames her for his low social standing during his youth (Flake, *Es wird Abend* 18).

[52] Each of Flake's divorces resulted, as he saw it, in the inability of his wives to give up their independence and to succumb to his authority, including his ideas concerning the ideal upbringing of his daughter Eva. See Flake, *Es wird Abend*, especially pages 161, 274-77, 290, 430, and 513.

they had premarital sex, and they have no idea about how to effectively run a household. Finally, toward the close of the novel, he finds his ideal partner in Rosmarin, an enthusiastic Nazi party member. She is a natural beauty, but still a virgin, smart but not intellectual, and first and foremost, willing to give up her career as an art dealer in order to become a full-time mother.

Flake's portrayal of this new, ideal woman Rosmarin, a girl, who in the words of a reviewer "is not a daughter of Nora anymore,"[53] was received very well by literary critics of the time.[54] However, among readers, *Die Töchter Noras* was less popular than Seidel's *Das Wunschkind* or Berens-Totenohl's *Der Femhof* and *Frau Magdalene*, confirming the initial doubts that Flake's publisher Ullstein had had about the book's appeal to a contemporary audience.[55] Apparently, a large segment of the readership preferred narratives featuring strong and independent female characters over Flake's representation of all emancipated women as enemies of men, echoing Irma Oszeret von Beckerath's earlier claim that Flake had no idea about what characters women really want to read about.[56] Yet what is interesting for the present project is that *Die Töchter Noras* nevertheless is grounded in the same discourses regarding the contemporary ideal German adult woman that are in his female contemporaries' novels: discourses about a (racially) pure and innocent woman whose destiny is to become a mother.

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[53] The original reads "Rosmarin, ein Mädchen, das keine Noratochter mehr ist," see "Der neue Roman: Die Töchter Nora's."
[54] See for example the review by E. Classen or "Der neue Roman: Die Töchter Nora's."
[55] As Flake writes in his autobiography, Ullstein did not even want to publish the book at first, because the publisher thought the book "entspräche nicht den Anforderungen der Zeit" (429).
[56] See Beckerath, "Otto Flake und die Frauen."

Moreover, like Seidel and Berens-Totenohl, Flake remains a visible author after 1945. In contrast to his female colleagues who believed in Nazi ideology, after World War II Flake admits that he signed the "Gelöbnis treuester Gefolgschaft" and became a member of the Reichsschriftumkammer simply because he would have done anything to secure his career.[57] While it remains debatable whether this allows critics like Karl-Heinz Schoeps to categorize Flake as a non-Nationalist Socialist writer (256) or just makes for a better justification compared to Seidel and Berens-Totenohl, one thing is certain: Flake's honesty still harmed his career. Leading publishers were unwilling to work with him, he became the target of Group 47, and no serious critic wanted to review his new books, as Rolf Hochhuth protested in Flake's eulogy.[58] However, the Bertelsmann publishing house "rediscovered" the novelist in 1958 and within two years sold more than 1 million copies of his various novels. Since then, Flake's works have reached a consistently large readership, and in 2003, thirty years after the author's death, Manuela Reichart surprisingly still encourages the readers of the *Berliner Zeitung* "to definitely read" Flake's narrative, centering on an *ideal* woman who in the words of the author "in good female fashion is always ready to relinquish her own opinion."[59] One would wish that this statement was intended to be ironic. Unfortunately, it rather indicates that instead of

[57] See Flake's autobiography, page 421 and 500. As his numerous publications between1933 and 1945 show, this approach seems to have paid off for him. A survey of newspaper articles I conducted at the Marbacher Literatur Archiv in summer 2014 reveals that Flake published twenty essays and articles in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1935 alone.

[58] It thus seems surprising that the author was nevertheless awarded the Große Bundesverdienstkreuz in 1955 and in 1960 the literature prize of the Bayrische Akademie der schönen Künste for his oeuvre.

[59] See Reichart 13. The original reads: "unbedingt lessen" and "In guter Frauenmanier ist sie so stets bereit, auf eigene Ansichten zu verzichten."

reviewing the book, Reichert merely repeats the publisher's own, decades-old statements, used to advertise the book when it first came out.

Strikingly, it seems that recent critics do not consider Flake's novels and female characters outdated. Instead, Klaus Bellin, for example, maintains that Flake remains "a high-ranking narrator, one who created wonderful, modern, self-confident female characters (the most beautiful since Fontane)" and who should thus not be forgotten.[60] What should not be forgotten, however, is that Fontane's female protagonists, such as Effi Briest for instance, were women with little control over their own lives and can hardly be characterized as modern and self-confident. Yet more importantly—and disturbing— is perhaps that book reviewers in the new millennium still praise such portrayals of Wilhelmine-like women.

In sum, although Seidel, Berens-Totenohl, and Flake wrote about women from various socioeconomic backgrounds, in all three novels the joy of motherhood, the connection between mothers and the nation, especially as providers of future citizens and soldiers, and ideals of how to run a businesslike household (or at least an efficient one, as in Flake's novel) predominate. In contrast to Wilhelmine and Weimar narratives, female protagonists enjoy greater autonomy and are valued when they assume sole responsibility to care for their children either with or without a man. Yet these narratives are not received as historical anomalies in connection to National Socialist dictate, but rather read as ideal womanhood in dedication to the state and subservience to men. Hence, Seidel's Cornelie for example, as independent she might be, is still told that "marriage

[60] See Bellin 14.

and the cultivation of the land . . . are the pillars of culture" (476).[61] Thus, as a woman, "she served" (316) as part of being, [62]producing "marriage's happy fruit—hope of the fatherland—glory of spouses" (475).[63] All three narratives' depictions of women and their options in German society between 1933 and 1945 thus restrict women to the narrow nurturing role of the mother, the social ideal for an adult woman in the Third Reich—and it is precisely this ideal that Klaus Bellin (unconsciously) refers to, when he argues that Flake should be remembered as a depicter of ideal womanhood. Clearly, the discourses about motherhood have not yet been sorted out.

To show how the nuances within these dominant images contribute to the larger hegemonic discourse on motherhood, influencing the nation's shared social imaginary, and thus restricting the socially acceptable identities of adult females in Germany, I will turn to the novels' own prose in the following section, including a close examination of the narratives' linguistic interactions.

FEMALE IDENTITIES UNDER NATIONAL SOCIALISM: TURNING TO THE TEXT

Based on their significance as representative novels for Third Reich literature, both *Das Wunschkind* and *Der Femhof* have been the object of past literary and linguistic analyses, most notably by Ernst Loewy in his *Literatur unterm Hakenkreuz. Das Dritte*

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[61] The German original in *Das Wunschkind* reads "Die Ehe, der Ackerbau . . . Grundlagen aller Kultur" (476).
[62] The German original in *Das Wunschkind* reads "Sie war. Sie diente" (316).
[63] The German original in *Das Wunschkind* reads "Glückliche Früchte der Ehe—Hoffnung des Vaterlandes—Ruhm der Ehegatten" (475).

Reich und seine Dichtung (1966) and in Eva-Maria Gehler's *Weibliche NS-Affinitäten. Grade der Systemaffinität von Schriftstellerinnen im Dritten Reich* (2010).[64] In what follows, I will thus not reiterate the well-documented social and cultural affinities (*Systemaffinitäten*) found in these novels—the tropes from the Third Reich that center on motifs such as *Heimat*, nature, war, death, and the general role of women as mothers. Instead, I will focus on the nuances of the discursive representation of mothers and motherhood, which continue into the postwar era and beyond. To complement my analysis, I will, as in the previous chapter, commence with an examination of the linguistic interactions in the novels.

Let us turn first to *Das Wunschkind*, which was written by a bourgeois author for an intended middle-class readership[65] and shares the same class bias regarding "good" mothers as the Weimar novels. Here, too, both proletarian as well as upper-class voices of mothers in the novel speak only at the margins. When they do speak, however, the author marks their discourse by using a register or dialect that differs from that used by the novel's heroine, just as the Weimar narratives tended to do.[66] Underscoring her authority compared with other women, it is also only Cornelie, the heroine, who speaks in the imperative. Furthermore, characters regardless of lower- or upper-class origin

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[64] See Loewy, *Literatur unterm Hakenkreuz. Das Dritte Reich und seine Dichtung* and Gehler's *Weibliche NS-Affinitäten: Grade der Systemaffinität von Schriftstellerinnen im Dritten Reich*. However, more than two dozen studies have been conducted on Seidel alone, starting as early as Margarete Schulenburg's *Die Stellung der Frau in den Romanen Ina Seidels*.

[65] That the intended readership was indeed primarily middle-class women is substantiated in particular when looking at the reception studies conducted. See Gehler 40, Adam,288 and most notably Regina Dackweiler 83-104.

[66] In Seidel's novel, the upper class speaks a mixture of High German and French, the servants and peasants speak dialect depending on the setting (Mainz, Berlin, Prussian countryside).

invariably display characteristics that contrast their appearance or behavior with this middle-class mother. Employing the same polarizing semantics of positive representation versus negative representation of the Other that Andreas-Salomé, Baum, Kolb, and Keun utilized, Seidel describes proletarian mothers and their children with the adjectives *simple-minded, miserable, ragged, haggard,* and *smelly*.[67] Again, echoing Weimar tropes, Seidel refers to upper-class mothers as *arrogant* and *elegant*,[68] while their behavior displays "an *aversion*" toward their children.[69]

Berens-Totenohl, reflecting her own proletarian upbringing, does not differentiate her characters' speech or present the lower classes unfavorably. However, her heroine Magdalene, like Seidel's Cornelie, is the only woman in the novel who speaks in the imperative, likewise underscoring her authority compared with other women. Moreover, both protagonists bear their sons without husbands and raise them alone. In consequence, they are described as *brave* and *courageous* by both the authors and contemporary reviewers. The same words were used to describe the "good" mothers who gave birth despite dire circumstances in Wilhelmine and Weimar novels. Hence, Seidel and Berens-Totenohl's representations, too, privilege the image of nurturing middle-class mothers, who make "the natural sacrifice of the mother,"[70] always putting the needs of their children before their own, echoing the same motif I identified in the Weimar case studies.

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[67] Seidel for instance uses the words "einfältig" (32), "elend" and "härter geschunden als das Vieh" (54), "zerlumpt" and " ausgemergelt" (90), "ausghungert" (91) and "schlechtriechend" (93).
[68] Here Seidel uses the words "elegant" (114), "mit Hochmut" (88)
[69] When Cornelie visits her sister-in-law, a countess, and asks why the children do not join them for dinner, the countess replies that she does not want to share the good food with them, they only get to eat leftovers from previous days in the kitchen, where they also not bother the adults who have "eine Aversion gegen Kinder" (122).
[70] Seidel's original reads "das naturhafte Opfer der Mutter" (478).

These words as tropes are indicative for the same discourses found also in other contemporaneous artifacts, such as newspapers and speeches or other linguistic occurrences. As discursive representations of motherhood in Seidel and Berens-Totenohl's novels they thus continue to present the binary images of female virtue tied to the "good" mother of the middle class inherent in the older texts and outlined in the previous chapter.

This claim applies to Flake's main protagonist and his ideas of the ideal mother, as well. Flake's discourses about women are, however, less representative than those depicted by Berens-Totenohl and Seidel.[71] Like Andreas-Salomé's Wilhelmine character Frank Branhardt, Flake's hero Arnoldi favors women who either obey him or whom he will *vanquish*,[72] not the daughters of Nora, who seek their independence from men and wish to speak for themselves. Consequently, a linguistic analysis of the narrative reveals that the novel's female characters generally speak only at the margins, regardless of class of origin. However, like his female fellow-writers, Flake utilizes a strategy of positive versus negative representation with regard to the depiction of "good" versus "bad" candidates to become his son's future mother. The author describes women he deems unfit as "intellectual," "self-righteous," "fun-loving and free-thinking," as well as

[71] My analysis did not set out to see whether the same binary representations inherent in the other texts can also be found in Flake's narrative. That they in fact do exist is therefore an interesting outcome, not an anticipated result.

[72] The original in Flake reads "bezwingen" (17). Moreover, he is even willing to rape ("vergewaltigen," 28) his second wife, when she does not agree to have sexual intercourse with him, whereupon she leaves him.

"prodigal,"[73] while he appreciates a "caring housewife" and women who are "tall, light-skinned and so healthy that one immediately [thinks] of the motherly functions,"[74] but who are "untouched," "proud and strong," "with courage and heart."[75]

In doing so, Flake—like Berens-Totenohl and Seidel—incorporates characteristics that mirror the official womanly and racial ideals of National Socialism, reflecting a similar terminology and espousal of values as the female ideal of nineteenth-century *Bildungsbürgertum* (as expressed, for instance, in Helene Böhlau's *Halbtier!*, discussed at the end of this study's introduction). Flake's language use therefore continues to restrict women's identity as well: an *intellectual* and *free-thinking* woman cannot raise a child.

A linguistic analysis of all three books thus documents the same, reoccurring use of linguistic patterns regarding the representation of mothers and motherhood that can be traced back to the late nineteenth-century *Bildungsbürgertum*.[76] Female identities are still connected to the role of the mother as the only desirable option for adult women, especially those of the middle class. For instance, when referring to an adult female, Seidel uses the noun *mother* 289 times, underscoring not only traditional gender roles,

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[73] The original German reads "intellektuel" (17), "selbstgerecht" (18), "lebenslustig und freidenkend" (208), and "verschwenderisch" (269).

[74] The original German reads "sorgende Hausfrau" (26), "großgewachsen, matthäutig und so gesund, daß man sofort an die mütterliche Funktion dachte" (34).

[75] The original German calls these women "unberührt" (61), "stolz und stark" (303), and "mit Mut und Herz" (301).

[76] None of the three books is available as e-book or online version, and all copies available to me are in *Fraktur*, the old German font, which is not recognized by any software calculating the degree of word categories used. Hence, I performed manual word counts and give only selected examples about linguistic patterns.

but also depriving women of their individual identities.[77] As a male protagonist in *Das Wunschkind* states, "Every woman a mother, with the sole meaning [of her existence] to care and nourish—every man a warrior" (318).[78] Moreover, *mother* or the adjective *motherly* prevails in conjunction with nouns like *blood, care, love, sacrifice, Heimat* and *soil*,[79] associating a loving and caring mother with sacrifice and the nation.

Notably, and in contrast to earlier narratives, novels under National Socialism thus shift female sacrifice away from the context of the family, but instead toward race, state, and nation. Even Flake, whose writing generally contains fewer blood and soil phrases than that of his female colleagues, acknowledges the increasing relevance for woman as mothers in the service of the state, because "society shall be only there, where the female counterforces will be utilized [re]productively, and only there will be a nation" (157).[80] Persisting language patterns privileging the image of *brave,* self-sacrificing, and nurturing middle-class mothers thus now more frequently reinforce a "good" woman's duty to bear children for the state.

The following literary analysis of *Das Wunschkind* reveals how this influential and highly visible novel represents in exemplary fashion how female identities under National Socialist dictates continued to be framed within these liming parameters. As will

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[77] In Berens-Totenohl's *Frau Magdalene*, however, the word "mother" is also used excessively, see for instance page 35, where the author uses it ten times.

[78] The German original reads "Jede Frau eine Mutter, in dem einzigen Sinn des Hütens und Hegens—jeder Mann ein Krieger" (318).

[79] Examples in Seidel are for instance: "mütterlichen Blutes" (61), "mütterliche Fürsorge" (307), "mütterliche Liebe" (309), "mütterliches Opfer" (437), "Denn Erde hies Heimat nur da, wo sie mütterlich war." (51). Berens-Totenohl also writes about "mütterliche Liebe und Treu" (*Frau Magdalene* 272)

[80] Along the lines of connecting motherhood and society, Flake writes in the context of the different social functions men and women inhabit, that women have to be seen primarily in their reproductive function as mothers "Gesellschaft sei nur da,wo die weiblichen Gegenkräfte schöpferisch zum Werk herangezogen würde, und nur dort sei auch Nation" (157).

be documented, the range of images provided to the middle-class readership remains narrow. However, the representation of mothers and motherhood evolves with regard to women's dependency on men and the possibility of combining motherhood with employment. In fact, this discursive shift thus requires the period's reexamination in terms of its relevance as a milestone regarding "socially acceptable" roles for German women, influencing the postwar era and beyond.

Manifestations of a women's only role as a mother commence on the plot level already in the opening paragraph of Ina Seidel's bestseller *Das Wunschkind,* introducing its heroine Cornelie as a nurturing mother, tending to her "seriously ill" infant (1:7). [81] When the child dies soon afterward, the narrative voice informs the reader that the protagonist, "a soul of superhuman strength" (1:15),[82] suddenly felt "empty of all wishes, except the will to fertility" (1:20).[83] Several things about this plot twist and the construction of this phrase are noteworthy, beginning of the usage of "wishes" versus "will." The noun *wish* refers to an unarticulated personal desire as opposed to the noun *will* as formulated and eventually enforced action to achieve a desire—and the latter becomes a critical word for Nazi planning. Cornelie is thus presented as active and able to achieve what she wants, yet without ego-driven personal desires. The author additionally underscored this notion as she refrains from communicating through Cornelie's own narrative voice, omitting an "I" perspective. In this respect, connecting fertility to will (and the nation's future) allows Seidel to emphasize an individual's

[81] The German original reads "schwerkranken Kindes" (7).
[82] "eine Seele von übermenschlicher Kraft" (Part1, 15).
[83]Seidel's original texts reads "leer von allen Wünschen bis auf den einen Willen zur Fruchtbarkeit" (1:20).

agency when it comes to reproduction, but without making it a personal desire. In doing so, Seidel's heroine's strategic use of words and narrative voice foreshadow Gertrud Scholtz-Klink's later famous call: "Say to yourselves, 'I am the *Volk*.' The tiny individual self [ich] must submit to the greater you [Du]" (Koonz 178), encouraging women to act not selfishly, but rather to assume their "natural" role as mothers of as many children as possible, sacrificing one's personal wants for the German nation's needs regarding procreation and a growing *Volk*. From its very beginning, then, Seidel's novel thus links the image of nurturing and self-sacrificing mothers to the nation and a "good" woman's natural duty to bear children for the state.

The passage continues along these lines, framing Cornelie's will to reproduce as stronger than mourning for her recently deceased first son. This impulse explains why Cornelie seduces her husband the same night her first son dies, instead of grieving over her child's death. Seidel thus signals to the reader in this passage that a woman's reproductive function is not only her most important contribution to society, but also that this function has priority over any personal feelings. Intercourse leading to another pregnancy assumes a higher priority than grieving. Moreover, when the reader learns in the next sentence, that Cornelie has indeed become pregnant again (1:20), the author emphasizes the triumph of the protagonist's will in making her "wish" for another son come true. Yet to replace one child with the next also highlights not only subordination of personal feelings for the benefit of the nation, but also how readily this nation replaces individuals in service to a greater cause. Connecting Cornelie's sacrificial act of

reproduction to the word "wish," however, allows prescribed motherhood for the sake of the nation appear not as a burden, but instead as a source of fulfillment. [84]

In this dual sense, the novel continuously stresses children as the foundation for the future of Germany as well as of a woman's satisfaction in life. Childless women like Cornelie's sister-in-law Maximiliane are thus doomed to discontentment and are portrayed as *unnatural*. Therefore, the narrative voice of Cläre, Cornelie's other sister-in-law and mother of six children, explains Maximiliane's depression and lack of joy in life: "What a poor fool Maxi was—what does she get from the good life and the beautiful vacations? She should have had a couple children, then everything would be more natural (1:132-33).[85] While Cläre's voice as part of the novel's heteroglossia acknowledges the benefits of having no children (for instance, a higher standard of living), this stands in direct contrast to what is supposedly *natural* for a woman, and causes "the desperate emptiness in Maximiliane's life" (1:251).[86] With the figure of Maximiliane and her mental illness, Seidel thus links contemporary discourses on reproduction and racism, which related the *unnatural* to the *degenerate* and hence to that which was *undesirable* for the future of the German race.[87] This connection thus pressured Aryan women to reproduce in order to avoid being stigmatized and punished by the state.

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[84] Berens-Totenohl frames motherhood the same way. The narrative voice in *Frau Magdalene* describes how the heroine feels after she gave birth to her baby boy by stating "Eine reine und lebendige Kraft fühlte sie von dem Kinde in ihr eigenes Leben überströmen, daß sie unsagbar glücklich wurde" (1:159).
[85] In the German original, Seidel writes "Ein armer Narr war die Maxi—was hat sie von allem guten Leben und den schönen Reisen? Ein paar Kinder hätte sie haben müssen, dann wär alles natürlicher" (1:132-33).
[86] In the German original, Seidel writes "von der verzweifelten Leere in Maximilianes Leben" (1:251).
[87] For a detailed discussion on the connection between motherhood and "valueless life," as well as the sad consequences emerging of this notion, see Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State"

In essence, then, Seidel adds another layer to the earlier representations of what happens to women who break out of established gender roles, as for instance Annette Kolb's *Daphne Herbst* depicted. *Das Wunschkind* therefore presents the same limited range of images available to adult women: either become a mother or accept the negative consequences of *unnatural* behavior. However, at the same time, the novel overtly connects reproduction and race.

Yet an important difference arises here, when compared to earlier narratives. Unlike in the Wilhelmine and Weimar novels, Seidel does not thematize female oppression in her writing. Reproducing contemporary discourses and policies strengthening the position of women, especially as single mothers, Seidel's female lead character actually enjoys a previously unknown degree of decision-making authority and independence from men, socially as well as financially, allowing the character to bring up her son alone, outside of traditional family structures and without depending on a family-based support system.[88] She is not addressed as unwomanly when she takes the reins at the farm for the good of the future.

In this context, the author sheds light on the Third Reich's family and social politics. Contrary to the perceived need to restore male authority in the family that we saw in the post-WWI novels, the family patriarch is here no longer considered essential in the new social order under National Socialism. Men are considered important only in the process of reproduction. In *Das Wunschkind,* fathers and paternal authority are thus

[88] All this is true also for Berens-Totenohl's novel. Her character Magdalene was never married to the father of her child in the first place.

either presented as dispensable, as in the case of Cornelie's husband Hans Adam, who literally dies days after the act, or even as incompetent, as depicted in the figure of Cornelie's father Dubslaw.[89] It is along these lines that the narrative voice of Cornelie blames her father for her half-sister Charlotte's death, because the girl was unable to behave in a socially responsible fashion: "Should I tell you, why my sister could not escape her fate? That is very easy: on the one hand she was spoiled like a princess, on the other hand she was intimidated like a beaten dog—that is what he made out of her" (1:273-74).[90] Unable to provide his daughter Charlotte, whose mother died in childbirth, with the necessary moral authority and nurturing stability that would change her, Dubslaw is portrayed as incompetent to raise children. In the eyes of his older daughter, and subsequently in those of the reader, he is thus the one to blame for the girl running away with a French soldier during the war, becoming pregnant, and dying in labor during a battle.

By stressing these negative consequences of an absent mother, Seidel echoes earlier discourses concerning a mother's crucial function as mentor and spiritual guide for children's social and moral development. In contrast to Wilhelmine and Weimar narratives, however, the plot lines and discourses in Seidel's novel go beyond merely pointing to the importance of a mother in securing the ideal upbringing of her children. Instead, Seidel shows with her character Cornelie that it might actually be a woman's

[89] The same schema also applies to Berens-Totenohl's novel. Magdalene has intercourse only once and becomes pregnant, the father of her child dies shortly thereafter. In addition, her father's authority is also questioned and depicted as incompetent.

[90] The German text reads "Soll ich dir sagen, warum meine Schwester in ihr Schicksal hineinlief? Das ist sehr einfach: einesteils war sie verwöhnt wie eine Prinzessin und im übrigen eingeschüchtert wie ein verprügeltes Hündchen—das hatte er aus ihr gemacht" (1:273-74).

duty to rebel against such a misguided patriarch. When her father wants his granddaughter Delphine to live with him, Cornelie thus tries everything to prevent her niece from being raised by her father, since, as she states: "to surrender the child to my father, that would mean to have her grow up as a second Charlotte" (1:273).[91]

However, Cornelie's rebellion against her father Dubslaw extends from the realm of the family and how to best raise children, into the realm of business. Once she returns to her father's large estate in Prussia after spending years in Mainz caring for her sick mother-in-law, she is outraged about "the bad condition of the fields, about loose sowing, about fallow land covered in weeds" (2:28),[92] and "the neglectful state of house and garden" (2:54).[93] Determined to preserve her son's future inheritance, Cornelie thus strategically uses her father's absence during a trip to take control over the estate. Subsequently, "she loosens the dependency of her peasants as much as possible, leading them into independence"[94] (2:271), and in doing so secures their loyalty and willingness to work harder for her than they ever did for her father. Soon the estate flourishes again, producing "astonishing results"[95] (2:277), in no small part due to the use of "modern machinery"[96] (2:271) and "the newest agrarian theories coming from England . . .

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91 The original reads "Das Kind meinem Vater ausliefern, das hieße nichts anderes als eine zweite Charlotte groß werden lassen" (1:273).
92 In the German original, Seidel writes "die schlechte Bestellung der Äcker, über ersichtlich flüchtige Ausßaat, über Brachland, das im Unkraut erstickte" (2:28).
93 In the German original, Seidel writes "des vernachlässignten Zustandes von Haus und Garten" (2:54).
94 The original reads "bald hatte sie begonnen, ihre Bauern selbständig zu machen und das Abhängigkeitsverhältnis soweit zu locker, als es irgensging" (2:271).
95 In German it is "erstaunliche Ergebnisse" (2:277).
96 The German original is "neumodische Einrichtungen" (2:271).

[regarding] sheep farming and the rational utilization of fields" (2:277).[97] In fact, Cornelie's successful reforms serve as a model for other estates, causing Dubslaw to recognize his daughter for her work.

Seidel represents a woman in a leadership position running not only a household, but also a large estate, increasing its productivity by drawing on new technology and theories, and exercising power over male subordinates. In fact, her narrative incorporates several strands of the prevalent cultural discourses related to the new role of women in Germany after 1933. The available data for this period speaks eloquently to German women not only as war widows who had to bring up their children alone, but also to a new generation of women—even on the countryside—who utilized the Nazi regime for their own benefits.[98] Like many women at the time, Seidel's Cornelie combines motherhood with work. However, the novel points to a shift with regard to the public's attitude toward the compatibility of a woman's professional aspirations, the role of the family caretaker, and woman as a leaders in their communities that diverges from previous eras. Precisely, *Das Wunschkind* delivers a blueprint of what it takes for a middle-class woman to become socially accepted as a working mother. As long as it is not "for selfish reasons," but in the interest of her children, a woman can successfully combine motherhood with employment and even receive recognition for her work.[99]

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[97] The German original is "mit den neuen von England kommenden landwirtschaftlichen Theorien . . . in der Schaftszucht und in der rationalen Ausnutzung des Ackers" (2:277).

[98] In this context Erika Quinn points out, that especially farmers' wives and young girls from the countryside enjoyed various new freedoms, and that with the onset of WWII more and more women actually ran family farms, similar to Seidel's representation.

[99] While this also applies to the representation of Berens-Totenohl's Magdalene, the writing of Otto Flake remains more conservative. Upholding still the patriarchal family model, Flake castigates all women who

Despite all of her heroine's accomplishments as a business woman, the author thus stresses throughout the novel that, above everything else, Cornelie values her role as a mother. Whether utilizing the third person narrative voice to inform the reader about Cornelie's desire to give into "the sweet temptation to sit next to the cradle, to take up a simple task at hand, and fully indulge in the purr of tender breathing" (Part 1, 60), [100] or the character stating in free direct speech: "I am after all arguably destined to be nothing else than only a mother" (2:401). The multiple voices in the narrative all depict the protagonist as fully embracing her role as mother.[101] Seidel's narrative techniques thus guide the reader's imagination in a way that leaves no question as to whether Cornelie would prefer to spend time with her son rather than work, were she not forced to work on the estate in order to secure his future.

In essence, then, the novel illustrates the dualities women were confronted with in German society after 1933. On the one hand, the official womanly ideal was the stay-at-home mother, who made it her priority to give birth to as many children as possible to guarantee the nation's future. On the other hand, the reality of the labor market and economic necessity forced a great number of women to seek employment. In addition, it was against party politics to sanction single mothers in any form. Seidel's narrative depicting a strong woman who is anything but helpless, and who enjoys considerable

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want to combine motherhood and employment as irresponsible and selfish. Arguably, the small documented readership of *Die Töchter Noras* indicates that women at the time preferred the newly available roles for women.

[100] The German is "die süße Versuchung, an der Wiege zu sitzen, eine leichte Arbeit in den Händen und ganz hingegeben an das Säuseln des zarten Atems" (1:60)

[101] The original reads "Ich bin ja doch wohl zu nichts anderem bestimmt, als eben nur, eine Mutter zu sein." (2:401).

decision-making authority and autonomy outside of traditional family structures thus does not present a historical anomaly. On the contrary, as numerous other novels of the period suggest,[102] the question is, why the public imaginary after 1945 suppresses this rather progressive image of motherhood, similar to forgetting about the sexual liberation that Dagmar Herzog attributes to Germany after 1933.

I thus propose that Seidel's novel fulfills rather than contradicts the reader's social expectations by underscoring the discursive representations of the time. Thus the novel can be read as embedded in a moment of change regarding the social imaginary's available, socially acceptable roles for adult women in Germany. From now on, middle-class women are free to combine employment with raising children as long as it presents a *sacrifice*, not *satisfaction*, and in doing so therefore erases any possible *Rabenmutter* stigma.

REPRESENTATIONS OF MOTHERS AND MOTHERHOOD FROM OUTSIDE GERMANY

As discussed in the previous chapter, literary representations originating in other Western nations dating to the Weimar Republic and even earlier provided their female protagonists with scripts that diverged from German narratives of the same time period. This tradition continues between 1933 and 1945[103] and is well documented and little

[102] As Godele von der Decken illustrates, autonomous female heroines with children similar to Seidel's Cornelie and Berens-Totenohl's Magalene were quite common, for instance Lydia Kath's "Aud. Geschichte einer Wikingerfrau" (1934), Margarete Boie's "Moiken Peter Ohm" (1935), Edith Salburg's "Die Unverantwortlichen" (1936) or Marie Grengg's "Kindelmutter" (1943), to name just a few.
[103] A great example is, for instance, Fielding Burke's (the pseudonym of Olive Tilford Dargan) *Call Home the Heart* (1932), a radical feminist/socialist novel focusing on the life of its heroine Ishma Waycaster. The

surprising.[104] Unexpected, on the other hand, is perhaps the representation of women in contemporaneous Italian novels. Despite the numerous ideological similarities between Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy, as I will address, the scripts and roles for women in Italian narratives had little in common with their German counterparts. However, with regard to the return to normalcy after 1945, the Italian literary representations stimulated a set of later social discourses determining the available social roles for women that could also be found in Germany.

Mussolini, like Hitler, equated population with power, as literary scholar Laura Benedetti explains. Hence, Italian policies and measures aiming to increase women's reproduction basically mirrored those introduced in Germany after 1933: ranging from "monetary awards and loans" for families to helping working mothers to "balance the responsibilities of work and family," while simultaneously trying "to confine women to the domestic sphere" (Benedetti 44). Hence, a number of similar, contradictory discourses arose in both countries during this time. In contrast to German novels portraying women primarily in the state-approved role of the nurturing mother, however, Italian "literature did not follow the regime in its celebration of the maternal ideal and its rejection of alternative female roles," as Benedetti attests (45). As her path-breaking study on motherhood and literature in twentieth-century Italy reveals, "the prolific mother

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self-educated, impoverished woman, who had grown up in a male-dominated society that offered little for her but to be a wife and mother, spends the novel in search for a better life. Similar to Edith Wharton's protagonist Kate, Ishma thus leaves her husband and son behind, despite being about to give birth to yet another child. Although she subsequently faces life as a single working mother in a mill, the figure feels liberated in the end. More contemporary, highly visible novels providing alternative scripts for adult women are also Mary McCarthy's *The Company She Keeps* (1942), or, in the British context, Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* (1934).

[104] For scholarly discussions on the topic see first and foremost Buford, *The Mother in French Literature* and Staub, *The Literary Mother*.

never became a literary theme" (46). The critic substantiates this claim by presenting numerous examples documenting that a great number of male authors and the vast majority of women writers intentionally omitted traditional images of motherhood in their narratives (50-52). The reason for this was two-fold: on the one hand there appears to have been a "general unwillingness of the literary world to serve as a mouthpiece for the regime" (46) and on the other hand "the representation of the mother presented particular risks for women . . . . The mere fact of portraying a figure that, according to official propaganda, represented women's sole suitable role in society called into question their own act of writing, highlighting its subversive potential" (50).

Furthermore, in the rare cases a novel represented mothers in Italian literature from this time period, the figure is often utilized as a vehicle to criticize either the regime or male-dominated society. For instance, bestselling author Ada Negri's *La Madre* (The Mother, 1926) centers on a mother whose son died in battle during WWI. However, unlike Seidel's Cornelie, who accepts the death of her soldier son as a necessary sacrifice for the fatherland, Negri's mother subsequently questions the justification of having to fight for the state at the expense of one's life. The novel thus stresses the "irreconcilable divide between the rights of the individual and the demands of the regime (53). Paola Drigo's *Maria Zef* (1939), in contrast, focuses on two sisters who are forced to live after their mother's death with their physically violent uncle, who abuses them. The much older sister Mariute becomes a surrogate mother to her baby sister Rosute and, near the end of the novel, in a final effort to protect the child, serves her uncle liquor until he is drunk and asleep, before she rises, an axe in her hand. While Drigo leaves it to the

readers' imagination about what will happen next in this open ending, the established horizon of expectation leaves little room to imagine anything else than the girl killing her uncle. With this ending, the author's drastic departure from earlier plots of obedience and resignation, widely discussed at the time of its appearance, thus paved the way for alternative, female scripts.

Hence, Benedetti contradicts scholars who claim that, during the Fascist regime, Italian "womanhood has been erased by motherhood, and motherhood has primarily meant generating and nurturing the male child," creating an archetype of a "powerful, self-sacrificial, . . . suffering, resilient Italian mother, who is the pillar of the family" (Giorgio 120), that supposedly prevailed in literary representations of motherhood in Italy until the 1970s. However, this notion, as Benedetti states, can easily be explained. After 1945, "eager to recover normalcy . . . that in a patriarchal society could only be understood as a reaffirmation of traditional gender roles" (74), the nation aimed to suppress all images showing women in alternative roles.[105] Canonical texts of the period therefore concentrated on the few literary representations of women as *good* mothers and obedient wives, as, for example, Guiseppe Marotta's collection *Le Madri* (The Mothers, 1952) illustrates. Furthermore, critics concentrated on "literary works of the period from the end of the war to the social upheaval of the 1970s" that "seem anchored to traditional notions of femininity and motherhood" (76), largely ignoring all works showcasing women in alternative roles. In doing so, scholars have contributed to the limited

[105] On the same note, it is therefore symbolically significant that female partisans were prohibited from marching with men in the wake of liberation, hence downplaying their vital role in the struggle for Italy's freedom (Benedetti 74).

representations of womanhood. Remarkably, herein lays a commonality with the German discourses on motherhood after WWII. To forget about the Nazi past and to return to normalcy, perceived likewise as patriarchal society, public debates affirm established gender roles and still prefer narratives restricting the role of females to that of the nurturing mother, as I will elaborate more on in the next chapter.

What stands out in comparison with the German novels of the Third Reich, however, as even this brief survey of highly visible Italian narratives demonstrates, is not only fewer novels portraying women as mothers, but also the lack of enthusiastic celebration of the Fascist maternal ideal and its rejection of alternative female roles. Instead, the representations in the Italian novels underscore that women as mothers can—and perhaps must be—the ones to revolt against established gender conventions, simultaneously criticizing the regime and male-dominated society. Hence, these literary representations provided its contemporary readership, at least to some extent, alternatives to the restricted scripts of adult females inherent in the German novels.

SOME CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE "GOOD" MOTHERS OF THE THIRD REICH

To conclude, all narratives discussed in this chapter show a relationship between several contemporaneous discourses. Most importantly for my project, though, they all continue to tie adult females to the role of the mother as the only socially acceptable role for women at the time. Yet the three literary representations of German women as mothers—in contrast to those found in the Wilhelmine and Weimar periods—depict

female protagonists as facing positive futures as mothers, with a greater sense of independence from men and the possibility of combining work with motherhood, thus responding to the issues raised in the earlier narratives. Simultaneously, however, these three novels exemplify a shift from women's sacrifice within the context of the family toward the context of the state, further anchoring the figure of the mother in her importance for the survival of the German nation.

Hence, compared to the tropes and plotlines of popular Italian works, the images of motherhood in the German novels by Seidel, Berens-Totenohl, and Flake do not question or even criticize women's sacrifices for the state. Rather, with their messages they support the maternal ideal of fascism.[106] However, what they do share with the Italian representations is the fact that all these novels have been frequently overlooked by critics as cultural artifacts in their significance regarding verifiable historical, social, and political messages about the social conditions in Germany after 1933. In particular, they connect with the return to normalcy after World War II, which was perceived as a necessary revival of more traditional gender roles, depriving women of the changes Nazi politics had introduced in terms of women's economic dependency on a family-based support system. Postwar politics, discourses, and critics thus focused on a return to patriarchal families, suppressing images of strong and independent women found in the narratives discussed in this chapter, and by doing so, facilitating the process of forcing females back into the private sphere and into the role of the stay-at-home mother. Still, by

[106] It is thus striking that Hans-Bernhard Moeller in his "Literatur zur Zeit des Faschismus" mentions none of the three novels.

the end of the war, economic necessity often required a large number of women to leave the home and seek employment. The need to work under these circumstances, however, allowed itself to be cast as a *sacrifice*, erasing any possible *Rabenmutter* stigma, especially when the welfare of children was at stake. The three novels described in this chapter also fulfill the fascist ideal by attributing abilities to women from even the most humble backgrounds, who can run their own farms when given the chance, and questioning the role of bourgeois and upper-class women in creating the future of the state.

Consequently, narratives like *Das Wunschkind*, with their emphases on women as nurturing and self-sacrificing mothers for their children, serve as examples of the socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned ways German women can be "spoken of" from the Third Reich well into the postwar era. Often seeming to operate beneath their readers' consciousness, these texts continue their documented popularity well after 1945 and thus prolong the restricting traditions of conceptual possibilities for what is thinkable and acceptable for German women over several decades. In doing so, these narratives thus not only reflect, but also contribute to the larger, hegemonic discourse restricting the identities of adult females in Germany, which calls for revisiting and reevaluating the period's literature in terms of prolonged influence.

In the following chapter I will illustrate how the dominant representations of mothers in fictional narratives originating in the postwar period thus evolve little. Only a limited set of different literary representations emerges that would take images of women into new areas, intended to challenge dominant views and discourses on motherhood.

However, as I will show, these attempts to generate a greater range of "socially acceptable" roles for women, does not find its way into mainstream German culture and its public imaginary.

Chapter 4: Restoration—Depictions of Motherhood in Early Postwar Literature

Historian Robert G. Moeller points out that WWII brought about dramatic shifts in public reassessments of gender relations shifts that gradually restricted women in multiple ways. West Germany's Adenauer government asserted from its inception that the foundation for a new functioning state and the restoration of social order would necessarily "include the reconstruction of the family" and of the "woman's place" (Protecting Motherhood 37). Hence, the FRG's call for a return to normalcy after the Third Reich went hand in hand with immediate changes in laws and public policies intended to reestablish traditional families and hence also gender roles. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, however, the return to social identities and social scripts prevalent before National Socialist dictates was also facilitated by mass media. Publishers, editors, and filmmakers played a significant role in redirecting public perception of women's status after 1945 back to the womanly ideal of nineteenth-century bourgeois femininity.

The most widely read example of these revised scripts for gender roles is illustrated in Heinrich Böll's 1954 novel *Haus ohne Hüter* (*The Unguarded House*). Retrospectively, it was recognized internationally as a *Zeitroman par excellence,* as the

Swedish Academy's press release on Böll winning the Nobel Prize in 1972 claims ("Nobel Prize in Literature 1972"). Böll's work will be taken up here as a case study of a narrative precisely tailored to embrace those dominant discourses from Germany's past that were restaged for the postwar FRG: discourses casting independent adult females as unable to live and care for their children adequately. That perception, in turn, lent public support for measures that would restrict women's independence in order to reinstate the ideal of the patriarchal family.

The subsequent sections of this chapter will first provide a brief overview of the situation of and discourses about women and the family in the early postwar period as context for a discussion of the production and ideology of the published form of Böll's novel *Haus ohne Hüter*. After setting the stage, I will address how Böll's novel exemplifies the period's revived emphasis on marriage as the only option for all *moral* adult women with children. Hence, as in the Weimar novels that rested on similar stereotypes, images of weak and helpless women prevail in a work that predominantly depicts females as needing male support systems in order to survive. Yet in doing so, as we shall see, *Haus ohne Hüter* was read for multiple social messages and some of them sharply contrasted with more official public debates centering on "a woman's place." In fact, Böll's literary representation simultaneously showcases and criticizes how West German women, at the time the majority of the country's population, continued to be oppressed by male-dominated society after 1945. After Germany's Zero Hour, women lost an even greater degree of independence and emancipation than they had gained during the Third Reich. Accordingly, as I will argue, Böll's novel presented readers with

representations of women's coping mechanisms, which might explain why the narrative was popular with a broad female readership, despite the fact that its female protagonists are not portrayed as role models. Although written by a male author, this work can thus very well be read as a women's novel.

My case study rests on the assumption that Böll's steady seller, *Haus ohne Hüter*, should be recognized as a "popular" novel in the sense that the narrative portrays dilemmas experienced by most adult West German women after WWII. Although not reaching sales figures comparable to Vicki Baum's *Stud. Chem. Helene Willfüer* or Ina Seidel's *Das Wunschkind*, the book is relevant as a complex discursive representation of dominant thinking about the roles of German women in the early decades after 1945 because it exemplifies the conflict of interest between the (male) government and its (female) population. Situating the novel historically, in turn, reveals why, although this work of early postwar literature ultimately fails to provide its readers with images of strong and successful women to emulate or empathize with, one need not conclude that the novel implies that women are unable to manage their lives under other circumstances. The ultimate published version of the novel reiterates images of women socialized to be wives and mothers as part of Germany's "recovery" and thus lacking the social support and economic options to enable alternative lifestyles.

The relative absence of social criticism in the novel can be attributed in large part to the editorial changes insisted upon by a male-dominated literary industry. As I will document, *Haus ohne Hüter* reflects how the young Böll was pressured to reframe the feminist perspective in his book in ways more welcome to the politics of the period. This

widely read novel again attests that, even after 1945, it was still thought that women in their roles as mothers had to sacrifice their own needs in favor of those of others to secure the future of the state. The immediate postwar conditions situated these perceptions in the political and social priorities of the German restoration. A brief survey of the era's most popular films will also support this argument.

WOMEN AND THE FAMILY IN EARLY POSTWAR WEST GERMANY

After WWII, Germany faced many of the same recovery issues as it had after WWI. More than four million men had died on the battlefields, leaving behind 3.3 million widows, many of them with underage children, as historian Ute Frevert notes (263). In addition, almost twelve million former soldiers were prisoners of war in 1945 (258). Hence, in the immediate aftermath of the war, millions of German women had had to fend for themselves and their children without any help from a male breadwinner and head of household. To provide for their families, many women continued to work in the male occupations they took on during the war (261) or cleared away mountains of rubble in the bombed out cities as *Trümmerfrauen* (rubble women), repairing damaged houses, factories, and infrastructure, as documented and still prevailing in the German public imaginary.[1] Furthermore, in order to survive and regardless of whether gainfully employed or not, the surviving Germans had to carefully manage the resources available to them as the majority of them were mothers and children who experienced shortages in

[1] As Frevert notes, in Berlin alone about 40,000 to 60,000 *Trümmerfrauen* were at work in 1945 (261).

housing, medical supplies, heating material, and of course food, causing malnutrition and exhaustion (259).[2]

Yet for a great many women, the gradual return of their husbands from the front or from convalescence did not necessarily improve their situations. As after WWI, integrating the returning soldiers and prisoners of war into their families after years of absence proved to be a difficult task.[3] Wartime experiences left countless men dispirited and often traumatized. At the very least they suffered from low self-esteem due to the military defeat. In addition, the long time away from their families easily resulted in alienation from their spouses and children. Often children "perceived the father as an unwelcome intruder" (Frevert 263).

On the mother's side the situation was just as fraught. According to several empirical studies of the 1940s, mothers had, under National Socialism and in the initial postwar years, "tended to play a dominant role as organizers of day-to-day affairs, as advisers in personal and emotional difficulties and as mediators of conflicts" (Kolinsky 29). A great number of women were reluctant to give up their newly found status, and were consequently seen by their husbands and in public discourse as challenging male dominance in marriage. As a result, the divorce rate during the early postwar years significantly increased (Biess 72),[4] much as it did after WWI.

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[2] Ironically, as historian Eva Kolinsky argues, these women thus benefitted from the training in household organization and resourcefulness, which they had received during the Third Reich as part of becoming "a new type of woman" (28).

[3] For a good overview on the details regarding the reintegration of POWs in particular, see Biess, "Survivors of Totalitarianism."

[4] In 1939 the divorce rate was at about 8.9 divorces per ten thousand of the population, in 1948 it was 18.8% (Frevert 263).

But not only were numerous marriages dissolved, statistics also show fewer new marriages were being entered into. Whole cohorts of marriageable aged men had died on the battlefields, leaving their female peers behind with little chances of a prospective marriage. In addition, many of the 3.3 million war widows did not want to remarry, but rather preferred to keep their state widow's pensions, granting them financial independence from men. Frequently, these women preferred the so-called "Onkelehe," which refers to the cohabitation with lovers, who were addressed as "uncles" by the children of these families (Frevert 263).

In 1948/49, a survey among women conducted for the popular women's magazine *Constanze* revealed that the vast majority of German women believed they had a right to "free" sexual relationships (264).[5] Yet while the "Onkelehe" was somewhat tolerated in the immediate aftermath of the war as a means of survival for mothers with children, this was not the case for single women. Also, at no point were nonmarital sexual relationships considered socially accepted by middle-class society. Consequently, by the end of the 1940s, the increasing number of single women, the high divorce rate, the growing number of extramarital relationships, and the documented changes in moral standards among women once more fueled public discourses about the German family, and thus the state, as being in crisis (Moeller 65).

Responding to this threat that was ostensibly endangering the future of the country, West German academics, churches, voluntary organizations, and politicians,

[5] Only 29% of German women at the time believed "free love" to be immoral, which echoes contemporary scholarship on sexuality during the Third Reich, for instance the findings of historian Dagmar Herzog, who demonstrates in her book *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* that Germans under Nazi dictate were anything but prudish.

with men who were dominant leaders of and overrepresented in their organizations (Moeller 6), worked hard toward "restoring the old familial order and way of life." Their vision saw a male head of household as a single breadwinner, relegating women back to the role of the dependent stay-at-home mothers, running the household and bringing up the children. As historian Robert G. Moeller illustrates in his groundbreaking study *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (1993), the measures taken to implement this vision brought drastic changes in divorce and family law, as well as in the family and employment policies implemented after 1945 that were effectively aimed at gender inequality and preventing women with children from living independently.[6] Perversely, the new law was less liberal toward women and the family than the Nazi state policies had been.

For instance, under the Nazi regime, mothers with children could fairly easily escape an unhappy marriage by means of divorce and subsequently exercise control over their own lives as well as that of their children. But the major changes in West Germany's divorce law after WWII made this option extremely difficult. The very liberal divorce law of the Third Reich was already replaced by 1946, when more restrictive and conservative laws were passed, based on the Christian concept of the indissolubility of

[6] This of course applies only to West Germany. The GDR needed female workers and therefore endorsed officially the model of the working mother as Gysi and Meyer extensively discuss in "Leitbild: Berufstätige Mutter—DDR Frauen in Familie, Partnerschaft und Ehe." Many of the legal changes concerning women introduced immediately after 1945 were thus later reversed in the GDR, see Sabine Berghahn, "Frauen, Recht und langer Atem."

marriage (Frevert 285). In effect, divorce became almost impossible[7]: not until 1977 could a couple divorce in West Germany again without establishing the blame of a "guilty" party (Frevert 286), rather than mutual consent.

Moreover, while the establishment of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) in 1949 technically granted equal rights to men and women, Moeller points out legislation still seemingly did not have sufficient power to induce changes in its underlying structures of gender-based inequality. Especially Article 6 guarantees "the state's protection of marriage, motherhood, and the family" (40), which was interpreted as a call to restrict women's individual rights in favor of supporting "women's role as wife and mother" (41).

Another prime example for gender inequality inscribed into West German law is the disparity between the Basic Law and the Civil Code (Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch), when, for instance, the latter addressed the position of spouses in marriage. Parliament and the government were unwilling to relinquish the father's prerogative in disputes over the upbringing of children and his legal status as primary representative of the family as outlined in the outdated, but legally applicable Civil Code of 1900, which had not been updated. It thus took ten years after the end of the war to declare this policy unconstitutional. In consequence, as Frevert argues "the idea of a 'natural functional division' between the sexes" remained unchallenged despite the nominal gender equality granted by West Germany's constitution (282), thereby limiting a mother's influence on

[7] For instance, if one party (statistics show this was mainly the husband) refused to get divorced, the other party could not separate from the spouse, unless there was strong evidence for endangerment of the physical well-being.

the upbringing of her children—even after a divorce.

Correspondingly, West Germany's first Christian Democratic government adopted a program of traditional family legislation and a family policy that was very successful in reestablishing the classical model of the bourgeois family as "the natural origin and source of state order" (282). Franz-Josef Würmeling, Minister of Family Affairs from 1953-62, aimed at stopping any structural change supposedly endangering the family as an institution securing the future of the state. With millions of unemployed men in the late 1940s, because the new labor law lacked antidiscrimination clauses preventing women from losing their jobs and being sent home, it became an accepted and common practice to dismiss female employees from their jobs in favor of men (Frevert 267). Historical accounts note that "German employment officials increasingly engineered the replacement of working women with returning POWs" (Biess 70).

Despite these measures, the official government policies were based on the premise that too many women were still gainfully employed in the early fifties. Creating a domestic parable parallel to the *Dolchstoßlegende* after WWI, Würmeling told a new version of how the home front was stabbing Germany's restoration army in the back. He officially declared in 1953 that female labor supposedly demonstrates "community-destroying character" (Cornelissen 53). [8] In doing so, the minister started to build up immense public pressure on women, even those who had held their positions for over a decade, to leave their jobs.

[8] The German original speaks of the "gemeinschaftszerstörenden Charakter" of women labor. See Cornelissen, "Traditionelle Rollenmuster."

Simultaneously, he "propagated the [image of a] family with many children as the 'right' family and in this context, women's domesticity and willingness to make sacrifices" (Helwig 13). This claim underscores "the central significance of the reconstruction of the family for the larger task of rebuilding postwar society" (Biess 71), while tapping into the rhetoric of self-sacrifice that had been in place in Nazi politics. Not surprisingly, Würmeling also declared in the early days of the Federal Republic that there was "no adequate replacement for a mother's care" (Helwig 13).

In this context, working mothers were accused of neglecting their offspring since they "have no time for their children and because of their exhaustion, they have no warmth" (Moeller 27). In Würmeling's opinion, only a stay-at-home mother could secure the ideal upbringing of a child, in turn explaining his opposition to the support of working mothers and his refusal to develop childcare facilities. Instead, reminiscent of the programs initiated in the early years of the Third Reich, the West German government introduced a range of measures in the early 1950s, from child allowances to tax reductions in order to create incentives for women to leave the workforce and stay at home while having children (Frevert 282).[9] Such legal measures, combined with public pressure and monetary incentives, soon succeeded in putting a larger percentage of formerly employed German women back into the realm of the domestic. Only one in four married women continued to work outside the home by the mid-1950s (Frevert 267), and not before 1970 would West Germany reach the same level of female labor force

[9] As jurist Sabine Berghahn points out, these policies of the 1950s continue to haunt the German state today. While other Western countries extend their social benefits on the basis of the two-income family, Germany is still fixated on a single breadwinner model and the principle of subsidiarity (90-91).

participation rate again as in 1939 (Cornelissen 53).

Consequently, Moeller summarizes, "what would best protect the family," as the institution purportedly necessary for the survival and future of the new state, therefore determined and restricted the individual rights of women in the postwar period (208). As my analysis of Böll's novel *Haus ohne Hüter* will document in another way, these assumptions became dominate: the limitations on adult females imposed in the aftermath of World War II, aimed at consigning women to the role of the married stay-at-home mother, effectively precluded popular representations of emancipated West German mothers. As I turn now to a discussion of his novel, the reader should keep in mind that Heinrich Böll, born during WWI, was a member of the generation whose mothers had seen their families through two devastating wars only to experience how postwar policies denied and ignored their plight.

A CASE STUDY OF EARLY POSTWAR NOVELS: BÖLL'S *HAUS OHNE HÜTER*, A *ZEITROMAN*

To contextualize the novel's origin in this historical moment, I would first like to provide a short biographical note about its author, Heinrich Böll (1917-1985), the youngest of eight children of a Catholic craftsmen family from Cologne.[10] When the

[10] For a detailed biography on the writer, see Heinrich Vormweg, *Der andere Deutsche. Heinrich Böll: Eine Biographie,* Victor Böll and Jochen Schubert, *Heinrich Böll,* and for a biography including many reprints of letters, quotes, and interviews Gabriele Hoffmann's *Heinrich Böll*. The official website for Heinrich Böll also offers information on all aspects of the author's life and work, see <http://www.heinrich-boell.de>.

financial crisis of the late twenties ruined the small family business, Böll grew up in poverty during his formative years, as his biographer Heinrich Vormweg points out (22). Despite the lack of financial means, however, his parents wanted their son to receive the formal education they had been denied, and sent him to a Catholic Gymnasium (30-31). Thus, growing up in between the working class and the *Bildungsbürgertum* informed Böll's writing and his lifelong commitment to the socially disadvantaged.

Böll's postwar experiences as an author, however, showed that he lived in a less socially reflective Germany—a nation more inclined to judge others rather than itself. When he tried to publish his first short stories, centering on war crimes committed by the Wehrmacht, he could not find a publisher.[11] Böll's biographer notes that the literary establishment was interested in restoring normalcy in the immediate aftermath of the war by providing readers with distraction from, not reminders of the unpleasant memory of the Nazi past and postwar hardships (130). However, while his wife supported the growing family with her small income as a teacher, it was precisely these topics that Böll continued to write about (116). Under the pressure of the family's increasingly difficult financial situation, Böll finally adapted his radical writing more to the ideas of his conservative publisher Friedrich Middelhauve regarding market preferences for postwar themes eschewing a critique of the Nazi past. Taking this advice led to the publication of his first short story, "Aus der Vorzeit" in 1947, and his first novel, *Der Zug war pünktlich*

[11] For instance, one of Böll's earliest stories "Todesursache: Hakennase" about a mass murder of Jews committed by the Wehrmacht at the Eastern Front was not published until 1983. See timetable page 410 in Balzer's *Das literarische Werk Heinrich Bölls.*

(144), in 1949.[12] While he had pulled back from more extreme critiques of Germany, Böll's work still did not sell well.[13] His hoped-for success—monetary as well as critical—came only after he won Group 47's prestigious literary prize in 1951 and subsequently changed publishers (152).

Beginning with his second novel, *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* (1953), Kiepenheuer & Witsch invested much more than Friedrich Middelhauve into marketing and advertising Böll (Boge 180), particularly because they "initiated systematic reviews," that is, intensive media coverage (Boge 171). However, this publisher also did so while heavily influencing the author's writing in terms of what he could and could not write. In fact, Witsch was actively involved in every step in developing Böll's manuscript (Boge 170), and worked with Böll to produce a compromise between the critical *Zeitroman* that the author intended to write and the editor's expectations about mainstream readers who supposedly wanted books that reflected the precepts of the political and literary establishment.

Most critics approaching Böll's early work have not considered the hand of the publisher when interpreting his novels. Yet interventions like these need to be accounted for as they point to a hidden agenda supporting established power structures in society—

[12] In contrast to earlier works, depicting German war crimes, the works center on the horrors soldiers endure in the war and the effect it leaves on a person, thus showing them as victims, rather than perpetrators.

[13] Between 1947 and 1950, the author published about thirty short stories, twenty-five of them in his *Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa*... But just like his narrative *Der Zug war pünktlich* (1949) and the novel *Adam, wo warst du?* (1951), the short stories remained largely ignored at time of publication as (Bellmann 8). In this context Birgit Boge reveals that Böll actually blamed Friedrich Middlehauve—who was a high-ranked party member of the at the time rather conservative FDP—to have intentionally prevented his works from reaching a broader audience (152).

just as documented in chapter two regarding Vicki Baum. In both cases a publisher wanted a book that problematized society, but which would still resonate with the public.[14] At the same time, as Boge's research suggests, Witsch's marketing stratagems had promoted *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* as not too critical or upsetting for potential buyers. Witsch's efforts paid off: the author's popularity with readers as well as critics increased significantly with the publication of *Und sagte kein einziges Wort*.[15] Based on the novel's positive reception, Böll subsequently received numerous literary prizes and was even appointed to the prestigious Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung the same year (Balzer, *Das literarische Werk* 138). Böll's next book, *Haus ohne Hüter* (1954), however, was the author's first novel to become a huge commercial success, riding on his new visibility. Yet once more, the book represented a concession to the interests of the publishing industry and to Böll's own sense of what needed critique in German society.

Set in the present, the time the novel was written, *Haus ohne Hüter* tells the story of two young boys, the friends Heinrich Brielach and Martin Bach, growing up fatherless in postwar Germany, a commonplace situation in the first decade after WWII. Both Heinrich and Martin's fathers had died in that war before the boys were born, and so they shared much in their everyday life experiences during Germany's early 1950s. However, they had very different formative years, primarily due to the differences in their mother's

[14] Böll's novel *Der Engel schwieg* written 1949/1950, on the other hand, was published only in 1992, because it was thought to be too critical and harsh in its depiction of German society the immediate aftermath of World War II. No publisher at the time wanted to risk its publication.
[15] The book was applauded by reviewers as literary sensation ("literarisches Ereignis") and was reprinted three times the year of its publication (Bellmann 8).

respective social status and adaptations. While both women lost their beloved husbands, they dealt with their new lives as widows in very dissimilar ways.

Heinrich's mother Wilma chose to live together with a series of men whom her son called "uncles" and in the eyes of society became an *immoral* woman,[16] particularly after she gave birth to an illegitimate daughter. She refused to remarry in order to keep her widow's pension and thus to maintain a degree of financial independence. Still, since she also had to support her family by working full-time, the responsibility for the family's household largely rests on Heinrich's shoulders. He is the one who shops on the black market, tends his baby sister Wilma, who shares her mother's name, cooks, cleans, and even manages all the family's finances because his mother is unable to calculate or manage income and expenditures. Exasperated, Heinrich, a working-class boy who feels abandoned by his biological mother, wishes for "a real mother" (92).

Although living under very different economic conditions, Martin also longs for a different mother. His mother Nella never overcame her husband's death, which resulted in her falling into a deep depression. Since then, she has spent her entire time dwelling on past memories and what could have been, had he not died. Unable to deal with the present and her responsibilities, she is neither competent enough to provide her son with care and affection nor to organize their household and its finances. Despite his family's relative wealth, Martin, like Heinrich, has to assume responsibility for himself, "because

[16] Böll uses the word *unmoralisch* as leitmotif, highlighted in italics, throughout the novel to describe Heinrich's mother, but also in the general context of all forms of behavior considered immoral by bourgeois society. I preserve the italization and will elaborate more on this theme in the later linguistic analysis.

he could not rely on the mother."[17] He is not threated materially, but he lacks vital parental guidance and psychological support. In the course of the novel, the reader learns that there is a person who realizes and is capable of tending to the boy's physical and emotional needs: Albert, a friend of Martin's late father.

The novel disappoints both boys' hopes for improving their home environment and their developmental options. To show what might be possible under other conditions, Albert takes both boys, Martin's mother, and Heinrich's sister Wilma to the idyllic village he comes from. After this respite, each family will return to their daily routines, revealing that Nella's escape from past memories and options to cope with her present reality are only available in a very different, supportive social environment. At the close of the novel, Heinrich and Wilma have had to return to their mother, who has moved in with yet another "uncle." Meanwhile, Martin's mother Nella has refused to marry Albert, deciding instead to devote her life to the memory of Martin's deceased father. These two boys, then, are both mired in the decisions of their mothers, victims of parental choices that jeopardize their futures.

A survey of the novel's reviews in literary magazines and newspapers demonstrates the book's initial reception was extraordinarily positive,[18] contemporaneous

[17] The German original reads "mit der Mutter konnte er nicht rechnen" (202).

[18] The media coverage that appeared in daily newspapers can all be found in the Grey Folder X: Böll, Heinrich, "Mediendokumentation." Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach. The other sources, such as literary magazines, are not part of the media documentation on Böll, but can likewise be found in Marbach as part of the collection on magazines and periodicals. In this regards, I would like to thank Heidrun Fink, who assisted me in finding the reviews on *Haus ohne Hüter* in these other sources.

critics calling it the "novel of German Restoration par excellence."[19] Reviewers particularly praised the novel's realistic depiction of West German society at the time, especially regarding the common practice of the "Onkelehe." For instance, Kay Hoft compliments the author's ability to "show the reality of our world" and his willingness to thematize "the problem called 'uncle-marriage'" (136),[20] a "precarious topic," according to Otto B. Roegele.[21] Roland H. Wiegenstein, too, maintains the narration to be "true to reality and an analysis of its time" and notes that "it is impossible to approach the problem of the uncle-marriage more complexly and austerely" (867).[22] Only Josef Mühlberger believes "today's reality is not *only* just as Böll shows it, but it is *also* [just as it is shown]," which acknowledges "the very exact depiction of the dull everyday life and the shadow sides of existence," with the latter referring to women having extramarital relationships (86)—a reality not often shown in the day's literature.[23]

Friedrich Sieburg is more outspoken in valorizing proper female roles: he calls women maintaining such affairs "half-whores" (623).[24] In direct opposition to these (in his eyes) fallen women, he discusses the character of the chaste Nella, whom he portrays

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[19] See review by Roland H. Wiegenstein, "Der neue Böll: Auf dem Weg zur dichterischen Analyse der Zeit.".The original reads "Roman der deutschen Restauration schlechthin."

[20] See the review by Kay Hoft, "Onkel-Ehen. Heinrich Böll. Haus ohne Hüter." in *Zeitwende* 26.2 (1955): 135-36, where he writes "Böll zeigt die Wirklichkeit unserer Welt . . . Das Problem heißt 'Onkel-Ehe'" (136).

[21] The original reads "heikles Thema," see review by Otto B. Roegele "'Haus ohne Hüter': Ein neues Buch von Heinrich Böll.".

[22] See the part *on Haus ohne Hüter* in Wiegenstein's review essay "Rechenexempel mit vielen Unbekannten," where he maintains Böll's "Erzählung entspricht der Wirklichkeit und ist eine Zeitanalyse" and "komplexer und schärfer kann das Problem der 'Onkelehen' nicht angegangen werden" (867).

[23] Josef Mühlberger writes in his review that "Die heutige Welt ist nicht *nur* so, wie sie Böll aufzeigt, aber *auch* so" and praises the "sehr genaue Zeichnung des trüben Alltags und der Schattenseiten des Daseins" (86).

[24] Sieburg's original reads: "halben Huren" (623).

solely in her role as a victim who lost her husband as result of the war and with him the chance at a normal life. Moreover, Sieburg points out in his discussion that her "son would seriously be harmed, if Uncle Albert would not take care of him in such a fatherly manner" (623).[25] While the figure of Albert is positively mentioned in all nineteen reviews found in contemporary media sources, the opinions regarding what caused the disturbances of social life portrayed in the novel diverge seriously. Sixteen West German critics focus in their interpretations of the narrative on the war as origin of the social disruptions, killing husbands and fathers, and thus preventing the characters from a "normal life." In concert with Würmeling's policies, they discuss the author's work as an implied agenda of strengthening the nuclear family as means to restoring normalcy after the war.

Only three book reviewers believed that Böll's novel also addressed social issues other than the war's effect on the problems facing fatherless families. The East German *Aufbau: Kulturpolitische Monatsschrift*, for instance, sees in the book's depiction of "moral disruption, a complete confusion in the forms of social and private living together," a consequence of late bourgeois society, not the war—a judgment one might expect from a socialist publication (332).[26] Accordingly, reviewer C.S. believes Böll indirectly argues against the patriarchal family. As this view reflected GDR ideology, the reviewer not only praises the novel, but also refrains from castigating Heinrich's mother. Instead, he merely describes her as living "together with different men in free

[25] Siegburg's original reads: "Sohn würde ernsthaften Schaden nehmen, wenn Onkel Albert sich seiner nicht auf so väterliche Weise annähme" (623).
[26] The original reads "moralische Zerrüttung, eine völlige Verwirrung in den Formen des sozialen und privaten Zusammenlebens" (332). See C.S. "Heinrich Böll. Haus ohne Hüter."

relationships" (332).[27] This assessment was not, however, an exclusively East German perspective: the West German Roland H. Wiegenstein's discussion of *Haus ohne Hüter* also thematizes the view that Böll critiques bourgeois family structures with his work. Wiegenstein writes:

> not all disorder can be blamed on the father's absence. It seems that way only to the survivors. In reality the bourgeois form of the "familial" itself is questioned; even then, the façade of bourgeois life had its gaps, even if marriage was still possible for both women. . . . The shifts caused by the war and postwar period would in any case require new forms [of living together]. (866)[28]

Nor are C.S. and Wiegenstein the sole voices to interpret Böll's novel as suggesting a necessary rethinking of family structures in terms of rethinking its gender dynamic. The female book reviewer Vilma Sturm likewise comes to the conclusion that, with *Haus ohne Hüter,* the author aims to raise awareness for the need to reconsider the father's role in the postwar family. She notes:

> Where is the father, who only resembled Uncle Albert a little? He does not exist. And that is the actual misery. The actual causes of the misery are not the uncle-marriages and the latch-key children, the "immoral" mothers, the killed and unwanted babies, . . . the actual misery is, that there are no more real fathers. They fell in the wars and in what came after them.[29]

Strum proceeds to define the "real fathers" as patient and supportive fathers, not figures of authority who demand unquestioned obedience and enforce this demand with brute

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[27]The original reads "lebt in freien Verhältnissen mit verschiedenen Mänern zusammen" (332).

[28] Wiegenstein writes in the original "nicht alle Unordnung kann auf die Abwesenheit des Vaters gewälzt werden. Das scheint nur den Hinterbliebenen so. In Wirklichkeit ist die bürgerliche Form des 'Familiären' selbst in Frage gestellt; die Fasade bürgerlichen Lebens hätte auch dann ihre großen Löcher, wenn den beiden Frauen noch Ehe mölich wäre. . . . Die Umschichtungen der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit würden in jedem Fall neue Formen [des Zusammenlebens] nötig machen" (866).

[29] Sturm writes "Wo ist der Vater, der auch nur ein wenig Onkel Albert gliche? Es gibt ihn nicht. Und das ist das eigentliche Elend. Das eigentliche Elend, sind nicht die Onkel-Ehen und die Schlüssel-Kinder, die 'unmoralischen' Mütter, die beseitigten und die ungewollten Babys, . . . das eigentliche Elend ist, daß es wahre Väter nicht mehr gibt. Sie sind in den Kriegen und in dem, was danach kam, gefallen." See review by Vilma Sturm "Der neue Böll: Haus ohne Hüter.".

force, as was often the case at the time. Thus, she blames the norms of masculinity reinstated in contemporaneous male society, in her view the greater immorality and cause for society's disturbances.

In short, not all critics agreed about how to read the fundamental messages in Böll's new novel. In fact, their interpretations were diametrically opposed. On the one hand, the majority of reviewers assumed the author aimed to foster the return of the traditional family with his narrative. On the other hand, a small group argued the writer's intention was to rethink the personal and social concepts of a family dynamic. What accounts for this divergence? The answer is simple: archival evidence, including final drafts of the book submitted to the publisher, indicates that Böll sought to write a book that was indeed critical of bourgeois family structures and related moral standards prevalent in early West German postwar society, but that he was told by his publisher that he could not successfully market such a narrative. That judgment about the marketplace, in turn, rested on the dominance of popular representations of conditions vital Germany's recovery.

For the Adenauer government that recovery demanded restoration of a traditional social order, provided by the traditional family that had a dominant male head of household as its single breadwinner, thus relegating women back to the role of the dependent stay-at-home mother. As I will now document, Böll's original manuscript was drastically altered before it came on the market, and only very careful readers, such as the three reviewers above, were able to still sense the book's original message lying just below the surface alterations made to it under the aegis of his publisher.

The evidence for this claim is straightforward. On April 4, 1954, Böll wrote a letter to fellow writer Joseph Breitbach, stating that he had finally handed the manuscript over to Kiepenheuer & Witsch that day. However, he writes that he had "read through, reworked, and rewrote" it so often that "I really don't know whether it is accomplished or a piece of dirt" (Schubert 314).[30] To be sure, authors often go through an extensive editing process. But in Böll's case publisher Witsch, as with the earlier works, wanted to ensure this realistic *Zeitroman* was still marketable and would not be too offensive, thus the numerous edits. Still, even after the changes, the novel was considered too blunt in terms of its representation of extramarital relationships, as the following letter to Heinrich Böll illustrates. *FAZ* Feuilleton editor Karl Korn, who received a preprint version of the novel, wrote:

> Dear Mr. Böll,
> Last weekend I read your new novel. Believe me, I am so happy for you. After the immense success of *Und sagte kein einiziges Wort*, I was always worried about you, whether you would continue to persevere. After I have now read the book, I am happy for you and wholeheartedly congratulate you! You have accomplished even more. The new novel appears to be more epic, broadly based, stronger, more masculine. I would like to have the book for a serialized printing in our newspaper, and I will send a letter to Dr. Witsch on this matter today, via express mail. It means so much to me, finally to be able to print a strong and fully convincing German novel. But there is a great obstacle. You discuss sexual and erotic confusion and needs with such frankness and so much openness, that you—believe this of a much set-upon and experienced Feuilleton editor [making this observation]—cannot expect the majority of the newspaper readers to accept. The way you write it is, in my opinion, not appropriate for a newspaper [installment publication]. Of course we could try it. Then we would have at the latest after about 10 or 15 installments such an uproar among readers and amongst those people with influence on the newspaper that we possibly would have to

[30] Jochen Schubert is the first scholar to give an overview of *Haus ohne Hüter*'s history of origin of as part of the 2009 newly issued edition of the book in the *Kölner Ausgabe* of *Heinrich Böll's Werke*. The letter I quoted from is reprinted there and reads "so oft durchgelesen, bearbeitet, neugeschrieben . . . daß ich gar nicht mehr weiß, ob es gelungen oder der letzte Dreck ist" (314).

> discontinue the novel prior to its culmination or even cancel it completely. I would not write this to you, if I saw no way to save the book for the serialized publication. . . . I believe it is possible, maintaining the essential substance, at times through some omissions or dilution, to make the novel newspaper-compatible. It would be worth a try. Please, do not say no right away. I guarantee you that this attempt would be as diplomatic, tactful, and as considerate of you as you can possibly imagine. (Schubert 315-16)[31]

Here, Karl Korn, cofounder of Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and editor of its influential West German feuilleton, states that he is afraid to publish Böll's novel, fearing "people with influence" would not like it and thus that the publication would have to be stopped—due to the realistic depiction of "sexual and erotic confusion and needs," connected to the "Onkelehe." This letter indicates techniques the literary industry used to influence the content of what was published for a broad audience and thereby exercised power over readers without the latter being aware of it. Such pressures led Böll to make significant concessions in his manuscript during its immediate prepublication phase. In the appendix to *Heinrich Böll's Werke: Kölner Ausgabe,* Jochen Schubert lists numerous

[31] The original letter reads: "Lieber Herr Böll, ich habe am vergangenen Wochenende Ihren neuen Roman gelesen. Glauben Sie mir, ich freue mich richtig mit Ihnen! Nach dem Erfolg von 'Und sagte kein einziges Wort' hatte ich immer so eine Sorge um Sie, ob Sie nun auch so weiter durchhalten. Nachdem ich das Buch jetzt gelesen habe, bin ich sehr froh und beglückwünsche Sie aufs herzlichste! Sie haben sogar noch mehr geschafft. Der neue Roman erscheint mir epischer, breiter angelegt, kräftiger, männlicher. Ich möchte das Buch sehr gerne für den Vorabdruck in unserer Zeitung haben, werde in diesem Sinne gleich auch heute noch an Dr. Witsch einen Eilbrief schicken. Es liegt mir so unendlich viel daran, endlich einmal einen starken und voll überzeugenden deutschen Roman drucken zu können. Aber da ist ein schweres Hemmnis. Sie besprechen die sexuellen und erotischen Verwirrungen und Nöte mit einem solchen Freimut und so viel Offenheit, wie man—glauben Sie das dem viel geplagten Feuilleton-Redakteur—ihn nicht bei einem Gros der Zeitungsleser voraussetzen kann. So, wie's bei Ihnen steht, geht es nicht, in der Zeitung meine ich. Natürlich könnten wir's versuchen. Dann hätten wir nach spätestens 10 oder 15 Fortsetzungen einen solchen Aufstand der Leser und unter ihnen Leute, die Einfluß auf die Zeitung haben, daß wir möglicherweise den Roman vorzeitig abbrechen oder ganz absetzen müßten. Ich würde Ihnen das nicht schreiben, wenn ich nicht einen Weg sähe, um das Buch für den Fortsetzungsabdruck zu retten. . . . Ich glaube, daß es möglich ist, unter Belassung der Substanz des Wesentlichen, gelegentlich durch einige Weglassungen oder Milderungen den Roman zeitungsfähig zu machen. Es käme auf einen Versuch an. Bitte, sagen Sie nicht gleich nein. Ich garantiere Ihnen, daß dieser Versuch so schonungs-,taktvoll und rüksichtsvoll für Sie ausfallen wird wie nur denkbar." The quoted letter is likewise reprinted as part of the author's correspondence in the *Kölner Ausgabe* of *Heinrich Böll's Werke* edited by Jochen Schubert, see pages 315-16.

changes made to the novel, beginning with the galley prints to the 2009 edition of *Haus ohne Hüter*. While Schubert does not comment on any of the changes made or puts them in relation to possible interpretative approaches, they hold a great deal of information that allowed me to identify the changes as largely in the kind of "omissions and dilutions" Korn suggested.

For the purpose of this study, however, I will only briefly focus on the most dramatic adaptation, namely the character of Nella, who was intended to be a parallel to Heinrich's mother because she too was a woman who had had free sexual relationships after her husband died. After the preprint version, however, her character became that of a chaste woman, devoted to her husband's memory. In the original version of the novel, the passage where she tells Albert about her affair with another man and also reveals her lover's identity has been manually scratched out on the galley proofs and changed to her having had no relationship with another men since her husband died (Schubert 388). Moreover, a passage showing Nella critiquing the institution of marriage is likewise missing (Schubert 389), as is the subsequent part when Nella states without remorse, "I assume, that when I broke Rai's widowhood, I am no worse than a woman who committed adultery once" (Schubert 389).[32] These few but representative examples illustrate how the galley proof changes radically alter Nella's character. Instead of showing only "immoral" female main protagonists in the novel, all left with largely few, if any, good options given their historical circumstances, the reader now encounters one

[32] The original reads: "ich nehme an, daß ich, wenn ich Rai die Witwenschaft gebrochen habe, nicht schlimmer bin als eine Frau, die einmal die Ehe gebrochen hat" (Schubert 389).

immoral one, Heinrich's mother, and a moral one, Martin's mother. This development suggests that Böll could not publish a novel with only compromised women, but rather was pressured to offer one figure with whom "good" middle-class readers could identify. As my passage analysis below will suggest, concessions like these naturally softened the novel's critical tones. However, as noted above, a careful reader will still be able to find enough examples in the book to cast doubt on any allegation that Böll intended to support the government's call to restore outdated moral conventions associated with the traditional family.

Whether or not the novel's success can be attributed to the changes made before the book came on the market, its sales surpassed even the publisher's relatively high expectations for *Haus ohne Hüter*, mirrored in the book's first printing of 10,000 copies, a remarkably large number at the time (Balzer, *Das literarische Werk* 139). Given that German readers still were more likely to spend money on food and furniture, this was an extraordinary success, which supported the book reviewers' unanimous opinion that the narrative constituted a significant literary analysis of its time. Shortly after its publication, the novel was named "book of the week," then "book of the month" (Balzer, *Das literarische Werk* 139), and in France it even became foreign book of the year (Hoffmann 136). It was translated into thirteen languages[33] and, due to high demand, had to be reprinted twice that same year. However, while Böll was becoming a household name, the influential Deutsche Buchgesellschaft (a "Book of the Month" club) considered the work's atmosphere as "too depressing" for its readership and consequently declined to

[33] See table of translated works by language in Böll, et. al. *Der Schriftsteller Heinrich Böll* 114-15.

distribute the novel to its book club members (Boge 169),[34] despite Korn's and Witsch's efforts to soften the book's social criticism and thus to forestall such a decision.

In what could be understood as coercive pressures on an author to adapt his work to the literary establishment's restoration agenda, only positive messages were endorsed.[35] Literary scholar Peter Uwe Hohendahl remarks in this context that especially books intended to be commercially successful, reaching a broad readership, were closely monitored by the literary industry, as these works served "the active control and steering of the literary market" (190). In other words, readers were not "truly free" to choose what they read. A preselection serving the interests of the (male) dominant bourgeois sensibility had already been taken place. In this case, the decision by the Deutsche Buchgesellschaft put significant public pressure on Kiepenheuer & Witsch, as well as on other distributors and publishers, in the end causing the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* to withdraw from its plan to publish *Haus ohne Hüter* as a serialized novel (Boge 169), despite Böll's omissions and dilutions at Korn's behest. In striking contrast to the books initial popularity, during the next three years, only 1,000 more copies were printed and sold. In 1960, however, the novel suddenly appeared in numerous new editions. Since then, *Haus ohne Hüter* has continued to be popular among readers as the latest printing, published in 2012 by the Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, demonstrates.[36] Likewise, its

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[34] See Boge 169.

[35] For more examples how the *Literaturbetrieb* was essentially restaurative in nature and supporting the Adenauer adminstration's political agenda see Ludwig Fischer, "Literarische Kultur im sozialen Gefüge."

[36] See overview of editions in Heinrich Böll et.al., *Der Schriftsteller Heinrich Böll* 94 as well as a search in WorldCat, the world's largest network of library content and services, <https://www.worldcat.org/title/haus-ohne-huter-roman/oclc/294753/editions?sd=asc&referer=di&se=yr&qt=facetNavigation&editionsView=true>.

1975 adaptation for the screen by director Rainer Wolffhardt enjoyed several reruns on TV (Balzer, *Das literarische Werk* 138), and it was made accessible to an international audience with English subtitles.[37]

Given the book's large documented readership for more than six decades, making it a steady seller, it is surprising, especially compared with Böll's later works, that literary scholars have paid little attention to *Haus ohne Hüter* over the years.[38] Aside from short entries in bibliographies and handbooks,[39] only one scholarly book has been devoted exclusively to the novel.[40] More than sixty years after its publication, even essay-length treatments of it remain rare.[41] Still, if critics do mention the novel, they seemingly all agree that *Haus ohne Hüter* presents an intriguing portrayal and critique of West Germany's postwar society,[42] reevaluating its moral norms and social institutions such as marriage and family (Vogt 287) by thematizing the role of women and children. Yet, thus far, only one scholar, Linda Hess-Liechti, has taken a closer look at the novel with regard

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[37] See film version of *Haus Ohne Hüter*. However, the film omits numerous key elements of the novel. For example, in the film, Martin never desperately wishes his mother would act like a traditional stay-at-home mother, engaging in household activities. Quite the opposite, the viewer even gets to see Nella clean and cook, and she is portrayed not as bad of a mother as in the book version. Yet whether these deviations are the result of adapting the film to its domestic audience' changed perception of the 1950s over time or with international distribution in mind still needs to be examined.

[38] Hans-Diether Grohmann comments on the surprising lack of national and international scholarship on the novel even in the introduction to his article (189). The overview of secondary literature on Böll's novels found in Balzer's study echoes this finding.

[39] See for instance *Kindler's Neues Literaturlexikon,*(ed. Walter Jens, 852).

[40] To my knowledge, the only scholarly book on the novel is Werner Sulzgruber's *Heinrich Böll* "*Haus ohne Hüter*"*: Analysen zur* "*Sprachfindung*"*, zu den Kritkmustern, und Problemkonstellationen im Roman*.

[41] The few, notable exceptions are: Balzer's content summary and interpretive overview of the work (138-63) and his contribution "Haus ohne Hüter"; Wilhelm Johannes Schwarz, *Der Erzähler Heinrich Böll. Seine Werke und Gestalten* (78-90); and most importantly for my project Linda Hess-Liechti chapter on the mother figures in *Haus ohne Hüter* in her book *Leidend, subversiv und kinderlos. Eine Untersuchung zur Rolle und zum Bild der Muttergestalten im Werk Heinrich Bölls*.

[42] This notion holds equally true for contemporaneous critics such as John R. Frey as well as for later scholars like James H. Reid or Bernd Balzer. See Frey's review of the book, Reid's article "Time in the Works of Heinrich Böll,",and of course Balzer's two contributions.

to its representation of motherhood as a family issue.[43] This absence of interest can perhaps be attributed to the fact that feminist researchers like Renate Möhrmann argue that, while presenting a significant exception to the prevalent male protagonists found in the majority of West German postwar literature, the mother figures in *Haus ohne Hüter* offer little to those interested in women as independent subjects (2).[44]

I disagree with Möhrmann's assessment. Instead, in my analysis of the novel in the section that follows, I will argue that this widely read work is extremely important, because it readily serves as a representative example for any discussion of this era's discourses on women as mothers. Particularly because its protagonists play out their fates at the intersection between popular and official imagery, it reveals a great deal about whether women had the possibility of becoming independent subjects in the early postwar years.

HAUS OHNE HÜTER: TURNING TO THE TEXT

The few studies that assess the content and implications of Böll's novel, such as Werner Sulzgruber's *Heinrich Böll: "Haus ohne Hüter": Analysen zur "Sprachfindung", zu den Kritikmustern und Problemstellungen im Roman* (1997), concentrate on the novel's depiction of the Nazi past, West Germany's capitalist postwar society, the role of the Catholic Church, and the author's use of language, especially the italicizing of

[43] See Linda Hess-Liechti, *Leidend, subversiv und kinderlos*.
[44] Möhrmann thus mentions the novel only briefly in the introduction to *Verklärt, verkitscht, vergessen. Die Mutter als ästhetische Figur* (2-3).

reoccurring leitmotifs.[45] Only Linda Hess-Liechti's short chapter on *Haus ohne Hüter*, part of her study *Leidend, subversiv und kinderlos: Eine Untersuchung zur Rolle und zum Bild der Muttergestalten im Werk Heinrich Bölls* (2000), examines it within the context of how mother characters in Böll's oeuvre develop over time, highlighting the significance of and the social roles assigned to the mother figures in *Haus ohne Hüter*.[46]

As mentioned earlier in this chapter with reference to the author's biography, Böll's *Haus ohne Hüter* was written by a writer whose works reflect his roots in the working class as much as they do the middle-class values of the novel-reading *Bildungsbürgertum.* In short, he was writing for a broad intended readership (Balzer, *Interpretationen* 120), reflecting his own background diversity. Consequently, Böll's narrative reproduces few if any of the class stereotypes frequently employed in works dating back to the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich analyzed in this study, whose characterization of the good versus bad mothers in novels were signaled almost exclusively by their socioeconomic status. In contrast, just as the two mothers were cast as parallels in the original draft, *Haus ohne Hüter* gives equal status to all the voices and actions of proletarian as well as bourgeois mothers when they speak or are described, Characters of all classes get to speak an equivalent amount, and, when they speak, the author does not mark their discourse by using a different register or dialect, as the

[45]Sulzgruber's book is the most extensive examinations of this particular novel. However, more studies concentrating on the same themes have been conducted; see my endnote 29 in this chapter.

[46] This is the most extensive examinations on the role of mothers in Böll's works in general as well as regarding this novel in particular. The other studies conducted mention the mother figures only marginally, see references footnote 29. In addition, scholars like Dorothee Römhild (*Die Ehre der Frau ist unanstatbar*) when discussing the female figures in Böll's work mention the mother's role of the mother at times.

narratives of previous eras tended to do. In addition, although money is mentioned, there are no class specific characteristics that contrast the protagonists' appearances or behavior.

In contrast to this class neutrality, the author does not forego distinguishing *good* from *bad* mothers—a moral or ethical stance. Böll thus implements a shift in perspective so that he avoids doing so based on class bias, even as he seems to be showing polar opposites to the reader. The novel does use polarizing semantics contrasting positive and negative representations of the Other that I have traced in novels since the Wilhelmine Empire. However, past writers such as Vicki Baum or Ina Seidel used similar oppositional semantics to contrast the *good* middle-class mothers with *bad* proletarian counterparts. Böll, on the other hand, adopts the same words to differentiate between mothers who do or do not conform to what early postwar society (including publishers!) considered appropriate behavior, but uses these tropes or stereotypes regardless of the social class of his characters. For example, his rhetoric about extramarital sexual relationships reflects the period's revived bias toward marriage and is not directed toward characterizing any one class. Heinrich's mother Wilma, who lives together with a series of "uncles," is characterized in this way. She is smelly, has bad breath (56) and rotten teeth, thirteen of which the dentist eventually has to pull out (55). These depictions contrast with descriptions of her neighbor Frau Borussiak, a mother who remarried after her first husband died at the front, in order to provide her children with a father (285).

She is described as "a pretty woman . . . with wonderfully white teeth" (61).[47] Similarly, Wilma's "dirty" appearance and "brittle hair" (72)[48] also contrast with Martin's mother Nella, who "was beautiful, blond and tall" (360), [49] but "who, although she had the reputation of almost a coquette, had never actually slept with another man in ten years" (32).[50] As becomes apparent from these few, but representative examples, the author employs the judgmental adjectives characteristic of heroines in popular novels (and in those addressed above), but does so with reference to sexual behavior rather than to social class or class-bound norms.

In addition to their appearance, the author differentiates the mothers also in the context of religion, further underscoring the connection between sexuality and morality. Whereas Wilma is described as nonreligious (295), Frau Borussiak is called pious (61, 295) and Martin's mother is portrayed reading the Bible (9). Along these lines, the reader repeatedly receives the message that sexual relationships between men and women are only socially acceptable in marriage and that "the union between a woman and an uncle was *immoral*" (150), because it "is against the sixth commandment . . . if men and women unite—and they are not married, then they commit a sin, and that is *immoral*" (297).[51] According to this definition, then "Brielachs mother was *immoral,*"[52] because she

[47] Böll's original reads "war eine hübsche Frau . . . mit wunderbaren schneeweißen Zähnen" (61).
[48] The words in the original are "dreckig" and "mübes Haar" (72).
[49]Böll's original reads "war schön, blond und groß" (360).
[50] The German reads "sie hatte, obwohl sie im Rufe einer halben Kokotte stand, in zehn Jahren nicht einmal wirklich mit einem anderen Mann geschlafen" (32).
[51] Böll's original states this "geht gegen das sechste Gebot . . . wenn Männer und Frauen sich—vereinigen und nicht verheiratet sind, sündigen sie, und das ist unmoralisch." (297)

does not a obey God's commands, in contrast with Frau Borussiak and Nella, a notion the author reiterates throughout the novel.

The repetitive use of the adjective *immoral,* italicized in the text as a visually striking trope, has been discussed by past scholars (Balzer, *Das literarische Werk* and *Interpretationen*), and most extensively by Sulzgruber, whose 1997 study convincingly argues the word reoccurs as a trope in the context of the novel's criticism of the Nazi past, money, the Catholic church, as well as in the confrontation of moral and sexuality, one of the novel's major themes (35-38). While Schulzgruber is interested primarily in word usage rather than their message implications (28-32), his research nevertheless documents how the author employs the adjectives "moral" versus "immoral" to set up binary oppositions between the novel's various female protagonists with children and to direct the readers' attention to them. Although Sulzgruber only investigates Wilma, Nella, and Frau Borussiak (38), ignoring the other mother characters of the novel, such as, for instance, Frau Welzkam, Frau Behrend, Frau Poske, or Frau Bresgen, his findings can be extended to all of the novel's protagonists who are mothers. In sum, the book shows only two types of mothers: on the one hand, the moral ones, who are either married or do not engage in sexual relationships outside of marriage, and on the other hand, the immoral ones, who do.

Yet there are grounds in the novel to further extend Sulzgruber's thesis that these oppositions constitute a trope by taking a step which he does not: he neglects to mention

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[52] Böll's original reads "Brielachs Mutter war unmoralisch" and can be found 45 times in the novel as Schwarz points out in his study *Der Erzähler Heinrich Böll* (28). Examples can be found in the narrative for instance on page 12, 98, 200, 201, and 304.

the fact that only the male characters in the novel, particularly figures of established authority, such as priests and teachers, make use of the word *immoral* when applied to mothers. Hence, arguably the norms for establishing what female behavior is socially acceptable are marked in Böll's novel as being articulated solely by men who are public figures and who reiterate dominant contemporaneous discourses about the changes in moral standards among women, echoing the public debates on the German family in crisis.

In contrast to earlier novels about mothers, Böll's postwar novel explores the social construction of women's role in marriage rather than confining his protagonists to class-bound stereotypes.[53] The perspectival shift suggests a major rupture in how audiences might respond to this text, at least compared to narratives before 1945. Frau Borussiak belongs—like Wilma—to the working class, yet is described as positively as Nella, a member of the upper class.[54] However, while these two women belong to the socially constructed group of "moral mothers," Wilma does not—it is not class that sets her apart from her peers in the novel. Instead, women with children of all classes can be depicted positively in novels about the era past World War II—as long as they obey traditional, moral standards. The "mysterious reason" why Wilma's illegitimate daughter, who shares her name, "was always dirty" (101), "always dirty, always smudgy" (102),[55] is thus not a mystery after all. Rather, whereas, "dirty" was previously a signifier

[53] That said, some overlap between the proletarian and immoral mothers exists, as the example of Wilma demonstrates.
[54] The same, however, cannot be said about the depiction of Wilma in the eyes of reviewers. For instance, Schwarz describes her as "Typ der zähen, lebenslustigen Frauen aus dem Volk" (79), thus lower class.
[55] Böll's original reads "aus einem geheimnisvollen Grund war Wilma immer schmutzig" (101) and "immer schmutzig, immer schmierig" (102).

employed to characterize "bad" proletarian mothers and their children in terms of class, the word now transfers to the "bad" immoral women and their offspring, regardless of class.

Nonetheless, this shift remains problematic because these representations, which can be traced back to the late nineteenth century *Bildungsbürgertum,* remain intact even after WWII. What I have sought to illustrate here is that Böll acknowledges and recreates his era's dominant discourses while at the same time revising the key signifiers for earlier, sociologically based characterizations of "good" and "bad" mothers. Even though the representations persist across class lines, the result is not liberating. These distinctions can now be read to make the case that women of *all* classes are being marked with the same tropes: the womanly ideal of marriage or celibacy as the only options for all women with children.[56]

The subsequent literary analysis will further clarify how *Haus ohne Hüter's* story line also echoes the stereotypes used by conservatives in the early postwar period to reestablish patriarchal society precisely because the text still emphasizes the negative consequences of raising children outside traditional family structures and without the support of a male head of household. Böll's single mothers *of all classes* are depicted as lacking the characteristics necessary for raising their sons independently—the text goes further into these stereotypes because the mothers' failures are experienced by the reader from a son's point of view.

[56] In a way this can be read as a parallel to the limited identities for women (nurse, mother, whore) found in the WWI narratives Klaus Theweleit discusses.

In the case of Martin, Nella's son, for instance, the child's inner monologue in the first chapter informs the reader that there "was nobody to have breakfast with," because, his "mother always slept until 10 o'clock" (9).[57] That is, if she came home at all, as "frequently her bed was empty, sometimes several days in a row" (13).[58] The reader's first impression of Nella as an unreliable and self-indulgent woman continues throughout the novel and is frequently associated with her losing sight of her son's most basic needs. As Martin's narrative voice lets the reader know, "his mother rarely cooked, never sewed, and does not make butter sandwiches" (195).[59] This is practice she shares with Heinrich's mother Wilma and may reflect the depicted similarities of the two women in the original manuscript. Hence, although the published version of *Haus* insists of Nella being a chaste woman, these references clearly point to the author's original representation of her as "bad" mother.

The novel's married women with children, on the other hand, are portrayed as present, reliable, and consistently involved in domestic caretaking activities. For example, "there, food was cooked *regularly* and the same for everybody: vegetables, potatoes and sauce. Everybody ate the same: grandmothers, mothers, fathers" (194),[60] or "Poske's mother was always at home, she knitted, she sewed and was always at home, when Poske came back from school. The soup was ready, the potatoes cooked, and there

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[57] The original reads "es war niemand da, der mit ihm frühstückte . . .die Mutter schlief immer bis zehn" (9).
[58] The original reads "oft war ihr Bett leer, manchmal tagelang hintereinander" (13).
[59] For instance his narrative voice states "seine Mutter kochte nur selten, nähte nie und schmierte keine Butterbrote." (195)
[60] The original reads "dort wurde regelmäßig und für alle dasselbe gekocht: Gemüse, Kartoffeln und Soße. Alle aßen dasselbe: Großmütter, Mütter, Väter" (194).

was dessert. She knitted sweaters, and socks with beautiful patterns, sewed pants and dresses" (304).[61] Martin concludes that "[o]ther boys had it better" (304), because their needs were consistently met.[62]

Worried about Martin's well-being, Albert, a friend of the boy's late father, critiques Nella's domestic shortcomings in similar terms (141),[63] such as her reluctance to clean up (118), a habit which eventually attracts rats (137). As a result of Nella's inability to take care of the house and to handle money, "the house more and more fell into disrepair, although there was enough money to maintain it" (134). She is also short-sighted and impractical: instead of having her leaky roof repaired, Nella buys ten bathtubs and distributes them over the attic to catch the water. [64] In doing so, "she spent about as much money on the tubs as an adequate roof repair would have cost" (135), illustrating the idea that "she had no understanding of money" (100).[65]

As Linda M. Hess-Liechti's observes, these qualities associated with a bad mother are the characteristics of an inferior housewife (24). What Hess-Liechti does not discuss in this context is how the novel also makes Nella's failure exemplary of the difference between married and unmarried mothers. Within the narrative, children of married couples are shown to have domestic, that is, *good* mothers. In contrast, the unmarried

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61 The original reads "Poskes Mutter war immer zu Hause, sie strickte, sie nähte und war immer, wenn Poske aus der Schule kam, zu Hause. Die Suppe war fertig, die Kartoffeln gekocht, und es gab Nachtisch. Pullover strickte Frau Poske, Strümpfe mit schönen Mustern, Hosen nähte sie und Kleider" (304).
62 The German original reads "Andere Jungen hatten es besser." (304)
63 Albert thus asks Nella "Meinst du, es ist gut für den Jungen , an dieser Schlamperei teilzunehmen und sie zu beobachten?" (141).
64 The German original reads "Das Haus verfiel immer mehr, obwohl genügend Geld da war, es instand zu halten" (134).
65 The German originals read "sie gab für die Wannen ungefähr so viel Geld aus, wie eine vernünftige Dachreparatur gekostet hätte" (135) and "von Geld verstand sie nichts" (100).

mothers of Martin and Heinrich are depicted as completely incompetent, unable to take care of their children and manage their households. Consequently, the reader learns both boys are dissatisfied with their mothers (22, 92). As Bernd Balzer has argued (*Interpretationen* 131), without the presence of a father, the well-being of children is jeopardized, because "the characteristic of fathers was *regularity*: *get up, breakfast egg, work, newspape*r" (Böll, *Haus* 12).[66] Hence the novel seems to insist what the contemporaneous German government would also assert: without a father, consistency and routine are absent, major elements known to provide children with a feeling of security growing up, and the women who lack husbands lack their center and logic.

The example of Heinrich's mother Wilma further underscores this idea that it is *fathers and mothers*, not men and women, who make homes. Wilma lives together with a series of lovers who are men present in the lives of her children, but these men are not tagged as fathers, as long as they come and go. In addition, with each new "uncle" Heinrich's situation worsens because his situation gets even more irregular. Just as importantly, the women seem to become steadily more incompetent without a husband's influence. Hence, both Wilma and Nella not only fail to engage domestic chores,[67] they are uneducable, especially in their inability to handle money: at best, the woman receives "pocket money that Heinrich pays her" (67). Thus when a woman is unwilling to marry,

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[66] The German word is *Regelmäßigkeit*, one of the reoccurring iltalicized nouns that Sulzgruber and others studied, and that is associated with fathers as the quote "Das Kennzeichen der Väter war *Regelmäßigkeit: Aufstehen, Frühstücksei, Arbeit"* (12) exemplarily demonstrates.

[67] Instead, it is Heinrich who shops (20, 100), cooks (73, 194), tends his baby sister Wilma (102), and even manages all the family's finances (65), because Heinrich's "Mutter konnte nicht rechnen, konnte nicht sparen" (99).

she adds to the moral irregularity, *Unregelmäßigkeit*, in the children's lives and fosters anxiety about the future. [68]

Following this logic, Albert expresses the belief that, unless Martin's mother remarries, the boy cannot be brought up to become a well-adjusted member of society. Consequently, he proposes to Nella (122), "for the sake of the boy" (125).[69] Albert explains "I love him, and I don't love you—I know you too well to really fall in love with you, but you are attractive enough, so that I would like to sleep with you every once in a while" (125).[70] However, while Albert with his offer to marry is seemingly willing to "make a sacrifice" in the name of the child, Nella is not. Although Albert tries to convince her by stating, "Your dreams are absolutely meaningless compared to the boy's life" (125), Nella refuses to marry again, primarily because she does "not want any more children" (125).[71] Instead, she socializes with her intellectual friends, whom she often meets while traveling, and attends conferences or lectures (109). As she lets Albert later know in free direct speech "in the end, I must do something. I would like it best to really work" (222).[72] Albert replies to her:

> Of course you have to do something, but to work would be absurd. Most people work for the simple reason that they have to feed their families, must have a place to live and the whole shebang. To have something to do is different than to

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[68] The original German reads "Taschengeld, das Heinrich ihr auszahlt" (67).
[69] The original German reads "Um des Jungen Willen" (125).
[70] The original German reads "ich liebe ihn, und dich liebe ich nicht—ich kenne dich zu gut, um mich noch in dich zu verlieben, aber du bist schön genug, daß ich gern hin und wieder bei dir schlafen möchte" (125)
[71] The German text reads "Deine Träume sind völlig bedeutungslos gegen das Leben des Jungen" (125) and "[ich] möchte keine Kinder mehr haben" (125).
[72] The German original reads "irgendetwas muß ich ja schließlich tun. Am liebsten möchte ich richtig arbeiten" (222).

> work—and you could have something to do all day long, (222) the latter referring to her son Martin.[73]

This passage is significant for two reasons that radically invert the inherited tropes that this narrative has cultivated up to this moment.

First, from a feminist perspective, it shows that Nella is not "irregular" so much as she seeks to fill her time with activities other than taking care of her son. Albert had implied that this would be enough for her by reminding her that she "could have something to do all day long" and that she also acknowledges answering him "'I know,' she said sighing, 'the child'" (222).[74] In doing so, Böll begins to mark as a fallacy the assumption that a father regularizes a son's life and guides the woman in making her caretaking obligations the sole focus of her life. Nella acknowledges the fallacies in the script she has been living out. On the other hand, she is unable to view mothering as the sole source of activity and fulfillment in a woman's life. By refusing Albert's proposal, Nella testifies to an unwillingness to give up her own dreams and independence for the sake of devoting her life to the boy who will soon be a grown man with a life of his own. Second, Albert calls Nella's wish to work "absurd" (222), because her family's wealth frees her from working based on financial need—the only socially acceptable reason for women to be gainfully employed at the time, as the author hereby underscores with Albert's dismissive observation.

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[73] The German original reads "Natürlich mußt du was zu tun haben, aber arbeiten wäre unsinnig. Die meisten Menschen arbeiten aus dem einfachen Grund, weil sie ihre Familie ernähren müssen, eine Wohnung haben müssen und den ganzen Kram. Was zu tun haben ist was anderes als arbeiten—und zu tun haben könntest du den ganzen Tag" (222).

[74] The German original reads "Ich weiß, sagte sie seufzend, das Kind" (222).

Böll's narrative thus has employed the tropes that have carried it to this point: both male and female readers might well ask if indeed taking care of a son is the best use of his/her time, if housecleaning is the most socially appropriate use of women's time, and if women should be willing to put the well-being of their children before their own in the terms suggested here (marrying a man one does not love for the child's sake), and viewing the role of the mother as antithetical to that of the professional or business woman. In contrast to the popular novels previously discussed about middle-class mothers depicted during the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, Böll's narrative has suggested that these bourgeois stereotypes, although having some emotional and pragmatic truths in them, are ultimately traps. The novel does more than mirror the issues related to postwar family structure. It also interrogates the definition of a *good mother*, to reveal how that definition is used to render women subservient to men instead of allowing them to find options that might open up greater opportunities for both their children and themselves.

In so doing, Böll implicates social and political attitudes of his time. None of the book's scenarios have happy ends. The "bad mother" may find temporary companionship, but will be told she is ruining her child, who himself is being trained to expect domesticity from his mother instead of love and cooperation. The "good mother" is expected to become a wife again "for the good of the child," even if that means surrendering herself to becoming essentially an occasional sex object to a husband who will control her activities and marries her only to direct the upbringing of her child.

Hence, neither woman received the social support needed to better her situation in a way her children would benefit from as well.

Representations of Motherhood in the Early Postwar Years: Some Conclusions

In sum, the novel's representations of motherhood illustrate one of the most prevalent public discourses of the Adenauer era: the presumption that women had a moral duty to return to the traditional gender role of the married stay-at-home mother. The almost complete absence of any images of working women in the novel, especially those with children, is how the text complies with the era's espoused prescriptions. Böll's story does, however, feature a number of young, single women in occupations such as typists, phone operators, secretaries, or sales girls, which all reflect traditional female employment opportunities "tolerated as a transitional stage" before marriage (Moeller 149).

This with *Haus ohne Hüter*, Böll to a degree anticipates his own *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (1974), where a woman who worked as a housekeeper and managed to save enough money to buy a car and a small apartment is easily stigmatized and demonized by the press. Katharina Blum has no children, but she has a home and car that she keeps as neat as she keeps her *großbürgerlich* employer's mansions. Later in the novel, Böll plays out across class lines the scenario that he only hinted at in the published version *Haus ohne Hüter*, revising and excising due to pressures from his publishers. To

be precise: in *Die verlorene Ehre*, women and men are not equal as citizens of the FRG. In the later novel, the reader learns how a perfectly ordinary woman who has worked hard and bettered her station is utterly destroyed by a press that encourages people to stigmatize her as immoral for having sex with a man she had only briefly met; in *Haus*, readers learn how perfectly ordinary women have brought their children through the chaos of World War II, only to then be faced with limited, low-wage employment options and a barrage of judgmental mentalities fueled by bourgeois standards of a bygone era.

In this respect, Böll's novel is a very contemporary *Zeitroman*. Similar representations can be found in the era's most popular West German women's magazine *Constanze*.[75] As a survey of eleven issues of the 1953 volume of the magazine (which I conducted for this study) reveals,[76] the majority of women portrayed in either images or texts—aside from reports on films featuring actresses—are sales girls.[77] Other professions depicted more than once in the sample include secretaries,[78] midwives,[79] nurses,[80] and waitresses—the "realistic" careers for the "good women" of the era.[81] Yet

[75] Each issue of the magazine had a run of close to half a million copies, as is documented in the magazine's masthead. Moreover, the magazine was also distributed internationally as a series centering on its female German readers around the worlds demonstrates.

[76] For this study, I analyzed *Constanze* issue nos. 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 of vol. 6 (1953). I chose 1953 because this was the year Böll wrote the novel. However, I was unable to access all issues of the magazine, as they are not part of the archival collections I visited. Therefore, I could only examine issues that I was able to buy from a private seller. I investigated whether working mothers were either depicted or talked about in articles, as well as if what kind of professions, if any, women were shown in. Yet although I was not able to study all issues, the sample can still be considered at representative since it covers most of the period in which the narrative originates and because there is consistency regarding the representation throughout, which most likely applies to the unexamined issues as well.

[77] See *Constanze* issue 14 Jan. 1953: 8-9; issue 28 Jan. 1953: 24-25, and issue 11 Feb 1953: 26, to give only a few examples.

[78] See *Constanze* 3 June 1953: 5 and 17 June 1953: 20.

[79] See *Constanze* 28 Jan. 1953: 8 and 11 Feb. 1953: 14.

[80] See *Constanze* 11 Feb 1953: 10-11 and 21.

the magazine also reported on careers for women that the editors felt were so "exotic," they devoted entire articles to them. Examples consist of a leper doctor,[82] a fashion designer,[83] a radio announcer,[84] and a female judge.[85] Remarkably, the latter is a widow, and the only woman in the entire sample mentioned as having a child. All other depicted employed women are young, single females. This is the failure of Germany's imaginary in the 1950s that Böll's *Haus ohne Hüter* points to—a place where Germany's Zero Hour remained a null point with regard to women's capabilities and potential contributions to society as whole.

The absence of working women who were mothers is not the only commonality that *Constanze'*s representations share with Böll's novel. The same holds true for the magazine's bias toward marriage. In addition to a multiple page section of personal ads in each issue for readers who want to marry, numerous articles focus on how to get married as well as how to stay married.[86] Moreover, the magazine's serialized novels center on these topics, as well. For instance, *Einen Mann her für Carlotta* by Giovannino Guareschi

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[81] See *Constanze* 6 May 1953: 11 and 15 July 1953: 4.
[82] See *Constanze* 11 Feb 1953: 20-21.
[83] See *Constanze* 8 April 1953: 10-11.
[84] See *Constanze* 17 June 1953: 18-19.
[85] See *Constanze* 28 Jan. 1953: 12-13.
[86] For articles on how to get married, see for instance the articles "Erste Hilfe für Einsame" in *Constanze* 17 June 1953: 24, offering lonely individuals help in finding the right partner, or "Ganz kollegial" in *Constanze* 8 April 1953: 32-33, suggesting how to better get to know coworkers as potential partners. For articles on how to stay married, see for instance the articles "Von Liebe sprach keiner. Gedanken über die Ehe-Diskussion" in *Constanze* 14 Jan. 1953: 7, then continued on 20-22 as well as "Schlechte Freunde verderben gute Ehen" in *Constanze* 25 Feb. 1953: 36-37, both arguing against divorce; and "Flitterwochen- und was dann: Ein Leben lang Geliebte?" in *Constanze* 29 July 1953: 7, giving advice to married women in staying attractive for their husbands.

tells the story of a young woman finding her true love,[87] while Dinah Nelken's *Ich an mich: Ein Roman für Liebende und solche, die es bleiben wollen* narrates the journey of a married woman who at first leaves her husband and son, but then recognizes her mistake and returns to them.[88]

Representations of alternative social roles—other than those of the working single woman or the married stay-at-home mother—are rare in this magazine and are typically presented in the same space that Böll's novel locates for his readers. Only one article of the entire sample, entitled "Ich hätte so gern ein Kind!" centers on "the single independent woman, who consciously wishes for a child."[89] The article was written by a male doctor who expresses sympathy regarding "the wish for a child grounded in women's nature,"[90] and it superficially discusses the pros and cons of the idea of single women raising children, including "widowed or divorced" mothers. Nonetheless, it concludes that, without "the father's resolute hand," the ideal upbringing for children becomes impossible and so it suggests motherhood should happen only within marriage.[91]

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[87] This novel ran in *Constanze* from issue 11 Mar. to 15 July 1953. However, the preceding and succeeding romance novels centered on the topic of marriage as well.

[88] Nelken's novel ran in *Constanze* from 23 Dec. 1952 to 11 Feb. 1953.

[89] The article can be found in in *Constanze*, 11 Feb. 1953: 7. The original reads: "die alleinstehende selbständige Frau, die sich bewuß ein Kind wünscht" (7).

[90] The German original reads "der in der Natur der Frau liegende Wunsch nach einem Kind." See "Ich hätte so gern ein Kind!" in *Constanze*, 11 Feb 1953: 7.

[91] The German originals read "verwitwet oder geschieden" and "die energische Hand des Vaters". See "Ich hätte so gern ein Kind!" in *Constanze* 28 Jan. 1953: 7.

Readers' responses to the article were published seven issues later, in a set of letters to the editor entitled "Mein Kind hat keinen Vater" ("My child has no father").[92] Tellingly, only two of the ten female responders agree with the author's notion of a father's seemingly important role in childrearing as a factor speaking against a single woman having a child. Instead, the reactions urge unmarried women not to have children based on the readers' personal experiences as single mothers. Three women report having been "marked as an immoral person" after they gave birth to their illegitimate children and explain how, since then, they and their children have been forced to live "in complete isolation."[93] Moreover, three women reported having lost their jobs, and one had to give up her university education—all as a result of their pregnancies out of wedlock, making it almost impossible for them to survive without the financial help of family and friends. Finally, one female reader points to the lack of childcare facilities that are essential for single mothers who need to support themselves and their children. Hence, these women do not that recommend unmarried women have children without being married due to severe financial and social repercussions resulting from single motherhood.

A survey of 344 popular films produced in Germany between 1950 and 1960, which I conducted for this project,[94] likewise points to the notion that motherhood is

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[92]See "Mein Kind hat keinen Vater!" in *Constanze* 6 May 1953: 16.

[93] The German originals read "zu einer unmoralischen Person gestempelt" and "völlig isoliert." See "Mein Kind hat keinen Vater!" in *Constanze* 6 May 1953: 16.

[94] In an internet research, using the filmportal.de, which hosts more than 80,000 films produced in Germany, I searched by year to establish what films were made in West Germany between 1950 and 1960. Out of these films, I analyzed the plot line of all feature films intended to entertain a national mass audience. Consequently, I excluded documentaries, films produced for special interest groups, or movies shown only in specific regions. Since my focus is on produced on films in West Germany, my sample excludes films made abroad, including Austria. Yet it is important to note that a great deal of films shown

socially acceptable only in marriage. Only 17of the 344 movies thematize unmarried mothers and their children, the majority of which depicts single motherhood negatively. Unmarried pregnant protagonists are bound to become social outcasts and have little prospects to adequately care for their children. Out of emotional and financial despair, these women are thus frequently shown to attempt suicide as a last resort, as is in the case in *Frauenarzt Dr. Prätorius* (1950), *Eva und der Frauenarzt* (1951), *Dein Herz ist meine Heimat* (1953), *Der Jäger vom Roteck* (1956), and *Das Mädchen vom Moorhof* (1958). While the female characters' lives in the films mentioned above can be saved at the eleventh hour, a happy ending only awaits *Das Mädchen vom Moorhof.* She finds love after all in a man who accepts her illegitimate child and marries her. Such a happy ending, however, is not the case for the other protagonists, and in *Das Dorf unterm Himmel* (1953) and *Der Edelweißkönig* (1957) the young women and their unborn children actually die in the end. Hence, in all of these cases, the audience receives not only the message that becoming pregnant out of wedlock is socially unacceptable, but also that it comes at a high price, sometimes even a young woman's life.

However, if the female characters on the screen decide to bear their children, their situation remains problematic. Unable to find decent employment, single mothers are depicted as having no financial means and, as a result, are presented to the viewers as unable to adequately care for their children. For instance, in *Ich heiße Niki* (1952) the impoverished mother abandons her infant Niki in a train compartment she shared with a

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in West German movie theaters during the period I analyzed, were imported. Hence, my sample of 344 films is only representative of German feature films.

wealthy looking man, whom she considers in a better position to take care of the baby than she is. Similarly, the penniless main protagonist in *Die Ratten* (1955) leaves her infant behind to live with a washer woman, since the young mother cannot imagine any other way out of her and the baby's misery. Likewise, the mother character in *Die Fischerin vom Bodensee* (1956) leaves her daughter to live with the child's grandfather, while she seeks a better future in a city where nobody knows her history.

Perhaps hardly surprising, the only viable option portrayed in this period's films for single mothers to keep their children is thus if they can find a husband. In *Dein Herz ist meine Heimat* (1953), the protagonist in the end marries the brother of the child's irresponsible father, who decides that, unlike his sibling, he will "do the right thing" and make an honorable woman of the child's mother. Likewise, in *Alle Tage ist kein Sonntag* (1959) the mother marries the brother of her deceased former boyfriend and father of her child. Yet it is not only the fathers' brothers, but also their friends and even strangers who generously care for and offer to marry the *immoral* female characters in order to provide for them and the children. This applies to *Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht* (1953), *Das Mädchen vom Moorhof* (1958), *Heimatlos* (1958), and *Die Landärztin* (1958).

In a few cases, however, the single mothers also marry the fathers of their children in the end, as the films *Was das Herz befiehlt* (1951), *Damenwahl* (1953), and *Ingrid—Die Geschichte eines Fotomodels* (1955) illustrate. These movies share that the fathers did not know about their girlfriend's pregnancies, since the relationships ended before the women know they were pregnant. Out of pride, they do not tell the men about their conditions and want to raise the children alone. Yet as soon as the men realize what

happened, they return to the young women, confess their love, and marry them. In *Gefangene der Liebe* (1954), on the other hand, a married woman becomes a female prisoner of war, and returns years after the war ended from the camp with a child another inmate fathered. Her husband, who still loves her, accepts the child as his own, and the film's ending suggests from now on they live happily as a family.

In sum, films produced in West Germany during the 1950s thus present its audience with bleak images of young unmarried mother: they either attempt suicide or abandon their children once they are born. The only alternative for women to keep their children and find happiness is marriage. Remarkably, only one film of the entire sample, portrays a young widow who manages to live without male help. The female protagonist in *Mit siebzehn beginnt das Leben* (1953) manages to organize her household and provide for her daughter. Yet soon after she enters a romantic relationship with an artist, and ends previous her celibate lifestyle, she dies in a car accident. The audience thus receives a two-fold message in this movie: first, only few single mothers can manage without male assistance. Second, this will only last as long as they remain chaste.

Stories, such as those presented in the above films as well as in the articles and letters in *Constanze*, seem impossible in a Germany only eight years after the end of the second World War, where any number of war widows were left to raise their children alone, and any number of fiancées lost their grooms, but not the children sired. Böll points to these problems indirectly, even while mirroring contemporaneous conservative rhetoric. He portrays unmarried mothers as unwilling and consequently unable to adequately respond to their children's physical and emotional needs. The author's use of

the children's point of view to frame their mother's failures elicits sympathy for their situation as victims among the readership.[95] But one must remember that children are the most unreliable of narrators when it comes to cause and effect, even as they accurately report their emotions. They know what they feel and what society calls it, not necessarily the real situations.

Böll accurately replicates the polarizing strategy employed to negatively depict women with children in alternative family constellations—the strategy used by the state and the media industries to prevent readers from identifying with these characters. In the official discourses of the FRG, unmarried women with children need husbands not daycare. Moreover, by framing them as egocentric and unwilling to make a sacrifice for their child that a *good* mother would, one of the ways that Böll's novel can be read is as a work that echoes minister Würmeling's claim that these women display community-destroying characteristics, endangering not only their children, but also the future of the West German state.[96]

For most critics of its day, this narrative suggested the necessity of having a husband, which in turn would allow mothers to realize their potential in only one way: exclusive time-commitment to their children. In this respect, Böll created a compelling description of the price women paid when this commitment was not met. He shows his broad audience the negative consequences that await mothers who are unwilling to

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[95] In doing so, the author also reflects the focus of children as victims of the war that is part of a general discursive shift from Germans as perpetrators toward victims, which has been documented for instance by Robert G. Moeller. For details on these discourses see Robert G. Moeller, "Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German Pasts in the 1950s." in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*. Ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 83-109.
[96] See Cornelissen for quote on Würmeling (53).

comply with social norms about male authority. Women who do not value the unilateral authority of men and the world they legislate become social outcasts and compromise their children's well-being.

This chapter has argued that the author mirrors public debates on all women's duty to become mothers. In Adenauer's government declaration from November 1953, in the year when the novel was written, the chancellor famously called for the "the strengthening of the will to [have] a child" ("Der Wille zum Kind" 5)—a frightening conflation of Nazi-era rhetoric with the needs of the fledgling FRG.[97] Böll underscores the artificiality of this demand by using the noun *mother* to address adult females 386 times over the course of his 367 page novel. Compared to Ina Seidel's Nazi-bestseller *Das Wunschkind*, who reserved the noun *mother* for middle-class women with children, the ratio of the word *mother* per page thus is about three times as frequent in Böll's narrative. His work thus effectively highlights not only West German postwar society's efforts to promote motherhood across all social classes, but also that seemingly no other socially accepted option for women existed. In essence, then he has given us a novel about mothers as seen by males.

Past critics have focused understanding Böll's novel almost exclusively as a critique of the "reinstallment of the old order in politics and society" after 1945 (Hoffmann 148-49). Yet given the evidence assembled here, I make the case that the author intended more: a critique of women's roles as outlined in West German postwar politics. He exemplifies how this era restricted the socially acceptable identities available

[97] Adenauer demanded the "Stärkung des Willens zum Kind." See "Der Wille zum Kind."

to adult females by consigning them to the role of a married, stay-at-home mother. He illustrates two mothers' reluctance to fulfill these demands in personal relationships and employment. That is, Böll shows how the system is failing women, foreclosing their options for and desires to become independent subjects. He does so by showing how women's limited options are circumscribed the absence of social services and by male figures of authority, who articulate what forms of behavior is or is not socially acceptable for women. Unfortunately, as documented earlier, Böll's publisher and the literary industry insisted on blunting this critique. Only later in his career was Böll in a position to publish without making compromises.

This example of how even a prize-winning author could be compelled by restrictive legal and sociopolitical parameters in the aftermath of World War II needs to be considered as part of the Zero Hour myth, as part of the literary establishment's restorative agenda. Not only did Group 47 set an aesthetic agenda in place, but the economics and politics of the nation helped preclude the emergence of representations of emancipated German mothers in literature, particularly mothers represented in middle-class contexts. No wonder, then, that there are almost no West German female authors who appear in the German canon of the early postwar era (the prominent female authors associated with Group 47 were mostly Austrians). The few female authors offering alternative representations were systematically prevented from reaching a broad readership during this time (Meyer 27).[98]

[98] As Meyer demonstrates, women's writing from the 1950s describes lesbian relationships, abortion, women's search for identity and "illusionless depictions of marriage and authoritarian patriarchal family structures" (29). However, in most cases only established female authors such as Elisabeth Langgässer,

Here, the question of readership comes into place. Conceivably, contemporaneous women readers would have been able to detect the inherent criticism in Böll's novel and probably chuckle when reading about a woman fixing a leaking roof by buying bath tubs—repairmen were, after all, scarce in the late 1940s, and women had a decade of impoverished family life behind them. Hence, I have suggested that a nuanced reading of the novel reveals that it can very well be read as a novel offering not a plea for reinstatement of the bourgeoisie family, as this era's representations in popular films and magazines seem to demand, but also or even alternatively as reflecting female oppression and dilemmas of the day. Such an interpretation, might explain its enduring popularity among a broad female readership despite its depressing content.

With the historical turning point of 1968 and the beginning of the second-wave feminist movement in West Germany, women began to revolt openly against gender inequality and the limited roles society assigned to them. But as I will discuss in the next chapter, even then, literary representations of emancipated German women with children were not considered unproblematic in popular publications.

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who had already published before the war, were able publish such stories. New women writers on the other hand, had tremendous difficulties gaining access to the literary sphere and finding publishers. Moreover, even when they did, they were confronted with a high degree of sexism from critics, resulting in violent attacks to the publication of their unconventional texts (57).

Chapter 5: Reverse Revolts—Depictions of Motherhood in Late Postwar Literature

The historical turning point of 1968 and the beginning of a second-wave feminist movement in West Germany also marked the beginning of a new era of discourses on motherhood, in public debates as well as in literature. Activists produced a great number of publications on maternal feminism as well as linking housework and motherhood with economics,[1] and they communicated with their public through newly founded feminist magazines like *Courage* and *Emma* (Gerhard 114). At the same time, a new women's literature began to flourish, focusing on reflection about and reports on self-experienced reproduction of patriarchal relations in society. As I will elaborate on later in this chapter, the often bleak and disturbing narratives these narratives produced, in conjunction with stylistic innovations, initially only attracted a limited and rather intellectual audience—this early German feminist fiction was anything but a popular literature. In fact, I suggest that a growing divide emerged between mainstream and avant-garde women's literature developed from the late 1960s onward, causing a considerable number of educated, but not intellectual female readers to become unable to identify with women's literature's

[1] Alice Schwarzer, "Hausfrauenlohn?"; Helke Sander, "Mütter sind politische Personen"; Gisela Bock, "Lohn für Hausarbeit—Perspektive der Frauenbewegung"; Hannelore Mabry, "Die Feministische Mehrwerttheorie."

new direction. Related to this, I argue, a new "literary establishment" develops, consisting of radical feminists and female scholars, who, as much as conservative publishers and critics, prevent alternative images of motherhood from reaching a broad audience and thus influencing Germany's shared social imaginary.

In this context I will address the case of Gabriele Wohmann to argue for the existence of a tier of feminist novels after 1968 that began to occupy a place between the politically radical avant-garde of feminist writing and popular literature.[2] Ironically, the emerging feminist literary establishment had, at the same time, begun to reject more traditional authors such as Gabriele Wohmann, a writer who had distanced herself from the feminist movement. Nonetheless, in her sophisticated writing style, she still critically commented on the bourgeois family as well as her era's assessments of progress about what a woman could and could not do. My case study is Wohmann's late postwar novel, *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* (Little Paula was home alone, 1974), which revolves around a stereotypically emancipated woman, who, as a full-time working mother, has no emotional relationship to her (adopted) daughter Paula. Wohmann's text explores her era's ongoing struggle with established gender roles, but in ways that concomitantly critique the feminist vanguard. Like Böll, Wohmann both acknowledges the dominant stereotype of her period's women and critiques it. *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* focuses not only on the supposedly negative effects of women revolting against the traditional role of the stay-at-home mother, it also parodies antiauthoritarian childrearing principles

[2] The term in German would be *Trivialliteratur*. When referring to "Trivilliteratur" I rely on the definition by Dorothee Bayer, who not only equates it with genres like "Unterhaltungsroman" in contrast to high literature, but also as a medium that "spricht besonders das weibliche Lesepublikum an" (8).

and the then fashionable trend in Germany of adopting children.[3]

The new women's movement missed Wohmann's intentionality in their evaluations of this novel. They understood the novel primarily as a harsh critique of its efforts to reconcile motherhood and employment. As a result Wohmann, became a *persona non grata* in feminist circles and was held up as an example of "bad" women's literature. Her novel's reception also typifies how authors examining traditional gender roles were purposely neglected by later female critics and feminists alike. Thus, while it is important for my project to discuss Wohmann's novel in terms of its nonfeminist readership's ability to read out of it the message that "a woman's place," at least if she belongs to West Germany's middle-class, is still considered to be at home, nurturing her children. Approaching the novel as an exploration of that message's validity, this chapter's case study suggests that Wohmann, like Böll, intended to provide more than a reification of motherhood as a great many women encountered it in 1974. By tracing the public debates surrounding the novel, I will illuminate how feminist criticism has adopted a kind of ideological either/or policy that has tended to render the middle tier of women's literature invisible—namely, high quality, serious writing that entertains without being trivial and problematizes without radically criticizing. Hence Wohmann, with a surface message comprehensible to her 1970s FRG readers, was dismissed by serious critics of her day.

[3] Beginning in 1972, the popular women's magazine *Brigitte* for instance featured in each issue a child available for adoption. Interested readers could contact the magazine and subsequently adopt the child. However, these adoptions were often problematic and children would eventually be returned as adopters were not always prepared for the challenges that awaited them, similar to what Wohmann describes in her narrative. See "Zwei Jahre Brigitte Aktion 'Holt die Kinder aus den Heimen'" *Brigitte* 10 May 1974: 85.

To substantiate my claims, the subsequent sections of this chapter will first provide a brief historical excursus on the sociocritical turning point of 1968, both in terms of West Germany's new discourses on gender equality as well as the way it signaled the emergence of a new literature by and about women. A discussion of Wohmann's narrative, *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus*, then follows, drawing on specific close readings that reveal Wohmann's subtextual propositions. To explain why these propositions were overlooked by contemporaries, I then assess the role that German second-wave feminism played in creating a new "literary establishment," successfully influencing what could and could not be said and written about women. The result was an absence of literary representations with the social capital to empower women after 1968—as least as conceived of by these female and feminist scholars. Hence, as we shall see, despite aiming for new, liberating visions for women, the FRG's developing feminist fiction ultimately contributed to suppressing images of new, viable, positive alternative social roles for women who chose to become mothers.

THE TURNING POINT OF 1968: THE PERSONAL BECOMES POLITICAL

To better understand the dramatic changes introduced into the social fabric of West Germany in 1968, it is critical to remember what Böll's *Haus ohne Hüter* gave testimony to, as we have seen: well into the 1960s, the notion prevailed that adult females were intended to become housewives and mothers. While the educational reforms introduced after the "Sputnik-Shock" in 1957 brought opportunities for more girls to enjoy a higher

education (Kolinsky 100), only the next, post 1968 generation of female students would benefit from these measures (Kolinsky 101-02). Young women coming of age in the early 1960s were still primarily educated on a lower level than men and, after a short period of employment, expected to leave their jobs once married.

Historian Ute Frevert reports that in a "survey carried out in 1964, 75% of men and 72% of the women questioned held the view that a [married] woman's place was in the home," taking care of her children (287). However, West Germany's rapid economic growth had also resulted in an increased demand for labor. Beginning with the early 1960s, in consequence, even married women were slowly welcomed back into the workforce, although almost exclusively on a part-time basis.[4] At the same time, only a fraction of these women worked out of pure economic necessity: the majority acknowledged that they were working to raise their family's standard of living (269). And more importantly, especially employed mothers continued to be harshly criticized by male church leaders, politicians, and social scientists alike, as these women supposedly neglected their children "for the sake of pecuniary gain" (269). Thus, working middle-class mothers and their children of the 1960s remained subject to prejudice and negative clichés.

During this time, the term "latch-key children" was increasingly common in public debates,[5] referring to the children who had to let themselves into home with their

[4] See the findings of Sibylle Meyer and Eva Schulze's study "Frauen in der Modernisierungsfalle—Wandel von Ehe, Familie und Partnerrschaft in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," particularly the figures on page166-67.

[5] As Vilma Sturm's 1954 book review on *Haus ohne Hüter* documents, the term has been used already back then. Yet its usage in public discussions increased only a decade later.

own keys, where they waited unsupervised until their working mothers returned (269). That phrase was often subsequently linked to the *Rabenmutter* discourses that centered on the shortcomings of working mothers. But not only were latch-key children considered disadvantaged compared to their peers who had stay-at-home mothers, the same prejudice was extended to those children who had found spots in the few crèches and preschools that sprung into existence in the sixties. Würmeling's belief that "there is no adequate replacement for a mother's care" (Helwig 13) had left preconceptions in the minds of people as well as a legacy of negligence in providing adequate, state-subsidized childcare facilities. This absence of sufficient childcare and the inadequate hours of service offered in existing facilities in West Germany,[6] in combination with the negative attitude toward working mothers, continued to make it very difficult for married women with children in the 1960s to escape traditional female gender roles, defined as people who were morally bound to the exclusive caretaking of their husbands and children.

However, while women were not yet demonstrating against gender inequality on the streets, beginning with the early 1960s and despite the unfavorable "conditions of patriarchal literary industry" (Meyer 58), a growing number of female authors increasingly began to publish a new tier of books, intended to be more serious in critiquing the limited role of women in West German society.[7] Their novels described

[6] In the GDR on the other hand, where all women were encouraged to work, the necessary social infrastructure enabling mothers to work, was provided by the state. For instance, while West Germany provided crèche places for only 1.5% of children under three, the GDR did so for 58% of all children (Frevert 283).

[7] See Meyer's chapter "Women's Writing in the 1950s and 1960s" for a good overview on emerging women writers of the period. In addition, *Neue Literatur der Frauen. Deutschsprachige Autorinnen der*

repressive power relations within the family, with the mother being rather the victim than the perpetrator, as well as depictions of the rigid sexual morality and sexual exploitation of women (Meyer 54).[8] Still, while these women writers—some more overtly than others—articulated the experiences and conditions of female oppression with seismographic exactitude even before 1968, their texts frequently remained marginal for readers, scholars, and the literary establishment.

Instead, as surveys of library records document, female readers continued to read what they had long preferred: the well-known trivial romance novels of Hedwig Courths-Mahler or the historical novels of the *Angelique* series (Strecker 127). Centering on the adventures of an independent-minded woman who successfully navigates the male-dominated sphere of the French court, *Angelique* was a constant presence on the bestseller list of *Der Spiegel* throughout the sixties, with a large documented readership that was looking for entertaining books featuring strong female lead characters but that nevertheless appeared to have some literary merit ("Der Biß in die Trondel" 118).[9] Its

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Gegenwart, edited by Heinz Puknus, gives an overview of 90 female writers publishing in the postwar period, most of them forgotten today.

[8] In addition to Meyer's discussion of Gisela Elsner's works as example of depicting oppressive family relations and women's sexual exploitation, see Carrie Smith-Prei's *Revolting Families* for in in-depth examination of this as well as other authors, challenging not only preconceptions about women's writing at the time, but who also explicitly focused on the negative effects of the patriarchal family for women.

[9] While the series has been written by the female French author Anne Golon, the books were first published in German by Lothar Blanvalet and his Berlin based publishing house, which held the copyrights. The first book in the series alone was translated into 27 languages and distributed in 45 countries. Until 1985 the complete series consisting of twelve books sold more than 150 million (!) copies and was adapted for the screen multiple times, most recently in 2013, airing for the first time on Aug. 3, 2015 on the ARD. See "Gründung des Blanvalet Verlags" <http://www.randomhouse.de/blanvalet/verlag.jsp?pub=1000>. Yet unlike in other countries, Blanvalet marketed these books of popular fiction differently in Germany to reach a middle-class audience. To do so, Blanvalet changed the title, because as the publisher reveals "Der war mir nicht literarisch genug. Klang zu sehr nach Dumas." Moreover, Blanvalet insisted in translating the novels with a more sophisticated use of language, an elegant cover, and, first and foremost, a high price. The book's selling price was 25 DM—that was about 4% of the median income of 650 DM per month, a

film adaptations likewise drew a huge audience into the cinemas. While these novels and films in fact thematized female subjugation to men, at times in its most brutal form—for instance rape that lead to an unwanted pregnancy— similarly to Vicki Baum's *Helene Willfüer*, the heroine, in the end, elevates herself above her misery. In doing so, the *Angelique* series thus followed the tradition of popular escapist novels as it purportedly presented an alternative female image, one that its readership could identify with, but hardly emulate in reality.

The novels of the contemporaneous, more realistic and feminist middle tier of women's literature, on the other hand, could claim being emerging "serious" narratives that depicted the situation of adult females with relative accuracy. Yet these novels remained without significant resonance. Despite their readership, they (like Wohmann, whom I include in this category) have been largely forgotten by scholars, and seem to have had little wider significance. In other words, these texts did not substantially influence public discourses on socially acceptable roles for women.[10]

A widespread change in public opinion about the role of women in the Federal Republic of Germany set in only after 1968, "a landmark which commemorates not only the student movement named after it but also the beginnings of the new women's movement" (Rapisarda 77). It was the point at which female university students founded the "Aktionsrat zur Befreiung der Frauen" (Action Committee for Women's Liberation)

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price working-class readers could not afford. According to the publisher, this tremendously helped in convincing booksellers as well as readers to see in the Angelique stories "das gute Buch," which means a book with literary merit. See "Biß in die Trondel" 117-19.

[10] See Meyer's chapter "Women's Writing in the 1950s and 1960s" for a more detailed discussion on the topic.

in Berlin and the "Weiberrat" (Women's Council) in Frankfurt (Wiggershaus 111). Their critical analysis of the reality of women's lives and its politicization, especially regarding the social conditions preventing emancipation, soon influenced public debates.[11] Yet it was Alice Schwarzer's 1971 article, "I had an abortion," about 374 women publically admitting to have had abortions, published in the magazine *Der Stern*, and the subsequent nationwide protests against the highly controversial Paragraph 218 of the Basic Law, which, almost without exception, defined abortion as a criminal act, that united women from diverse backgrounds across the country (Wiggershaus 116).[12] Female activists succeeded in creating awareness regarding women's reproductive choices circumscribed by male-dominated society.

Equally important, the resulting public debates addressed a variety of issues regarding gender inequality and criticizing the social conditions preventing a broader range of available identities for adult women. Thus, within a short period of time a significant attitude transformation had emerged in West Germany, as illustrated by a follow-up survey regarding "a woman's place," conducted ten years after the initial study quoted above. According to Frevert, only "42 per cent of the men and 35 per cent of the women" still believed women's role was restricted to the married stay-at-home mother (287), a decrease of more than 30% in only ten years. Clearly, the FRG's women's

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[11] For instance, Erika Runge's documentation *Frauen.Versuche zur Emazipation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) serves as an example here as a work which heavily influenced discussions about the subordination of women in marriage.

[12] It should be noted that French feminists affiliated with the French women's liberation movement (MLF) had already signed *The Manifesto of the 343*, a declaration that was signed by 343 women admitting to having had an abortion, which appeared in *Le Nouvel Observateur* on 5 April 1971—an act which made them liable to imprisonment. Schwarzer had worked with this group and imported the idea to Germany. Her article appeared in June of the same year.

movement reached far beyond its activist base consisting primarily of "young, well educated, independent-minded" individuals (297).

By 1974, the year Wohmann's novel was published, a "growing sense that the role of the housewife was not enough" strongly influenced a greater number of women to seek employment outside the home (273). Instead of "subsuming one's own individuality in the service of others (husband and children)" (273), a growing number of married women saw the value of working for their own personal satisfaction and in order to enjoy social opportunities associated with employment, rather than for financial reasons (272-73). Moreover, feminist nonfiction frequently addressed the combination of work and motherhood, especially its challenges,[13] from this time onwards.[14]

However, while it became more socially acceptable after the early 1970s to combine employment with raising a family, the stigma of the *Rabenmutter* who was sacrificing her child for her own needs was not erased. Therefore, women with children, particularly from the middle class, still tended to take only part-time jobs, which allowed them to work while their children were supervised at the increasingly available childcare institutions in the mornings.[15] Furthermore, during this period, gradual changes were also taking place with respect to public perceptions about child development and children's needs. While only a fraction of families experimented with alternative lifestyles and

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[13] This is true not only for activists, but also established women writers. A case in point, the poet Hilde Domin wrote "Über die Schwierigkeiten, eine berufstätige Frau zu sein" in *Von der Natur nicht vorgesehen. Autobiographisches* (Munich: Piper, 1974), 42-46.

[14] See footnote 334.

[15] However, as Meyer and Schulze point out, while the number of childcare facilities has steadily increased since the 1960s, the overall access to childcare was—and still is—inadequate, because of the opening hours and the remaining deficit between offered spots and actual demand, especially in big cities (188).

raised their children according to antiauthoritarian principles, without behavioral taboos and gender-role expectations (293), the relationship between parents and children in the early 1970s nevertheless fundamentally started to change.

According to Sibylle Meyer and Eva Schulze, since that shift, the child has been seen as an "individual personality and partner" whose needs and wishes must be respected (180), in stark contrast to the authoritarian upbringing of children in the 1950s and 1960s. The new image of the family highlighted lengthy explanations and discussions between parent and children, deliberately balancing the needs of adults and children, a process replacing the enforcement of rules per se. Moreover, keeping up with the latest developments in child pedagogy had also become a must for parents, since *good* parenting required constant training, including formal classes (180). Consequently, motherhood itself became more and more like *work* or a full-time job, beginning with the mid-1970s, and in this generation, it was seen as requiring an unprecedented commitment. At the same time, women were interested more than ever in seeking employment outside the home. Women thus were still facing what seemed to be a conflicted decision: either being a *good* mother, albeit in new ways, or working for personal fulfillment.

Yet from its beginnings, the new women's movement was also split in terms of how to approach the role of women as mothers and motherhood as a social institution. This divide continued to grow, and by the mid-1970s it became a critical issue (Frevert 292). Gunild Feigenwinter's *Manifest der Mütter* (1976) exemplarily illustrates the crisis that had been reached. A feminist activist herself, she decries the reality that women with

children are not only disadvantaged in society, but also increasingly disadvantaged within the women's movement. She particularly criticizes the movement's intellectuals and the theorists influencing them, such as Herbert Marcuse, for their ivory tower politics in theoretically approaching gender inequality, but not making an effort to offer a working mother actual help with her extensive daily challenges.

In what follows, I will elaborate on how this division is also reflected in the development of the period's new women's literature. Furthermore, I will clarify how this development contributed to a *de facto* either/or policy for writers in the era, that resulted not only in the disappearance of a literary middle tier addressing this subject, but also increasingly blocked positive representations of mothers and motherhood in women's writing.

WOMEN'S LITERATURE AND REPRESENTATIONS OF MOTHERHOOD AFTER 1968

As has been well-documented by scholars, issues central to the second-wave feminist movement found their way quickly into activist literature (especially magazines), as well as into fiction.[16] Most importantly for this project, however, is that the representations of women immediately after 1968 still focused on the subordinate role of adult females as mothers in patriarchal structures (Altbach, 1984). Fueled by their ideals of freeing women from marriage and the family, feminists sharply revolted against

[16] For a good general overview see "Frauenliteratur-Literatur in der Frauenbewegung" (375-88) in *Geschichte der Deutschsprachigen Literatur seit 1945*, edited by Ralf Schnell.; for detailed discussions on the development of women literature especially after 1968 see, for instance, *Post-war Women's Writing in German: Feminist Critical Approaches*, edited by Chris Weedon.

these social conventions and the apparent psycho-social oppression they imposed, especially in the male-dominated mass media (Wiggershaus 124).[17] To counter these pressures, feminists often wrote autobiographical narratives in the late 1960s, in the form of texts reflecting their concerns with social and political contexts, but also with internal family dynamics. Today's scholars concur that such writings were relevant to a broad female readership and united them in demanding a redefinition of motherhood (Rapisarda 98).

With the advent of the 1970s, as Helga Kraft and Barbara Kosta point out, a shift occurred from this more documentary mode of representation to more subjective explorations of gendered identity, often also employing experimental language ("Critical Interventions" 71). A growing emphasis on subjectivity in these newer texts reflected a decisive development in the literature of West German women writers ("Critical Interventions" 71). Consequently, by the mid-1970s, a wave of women's literature flooded the market, intended to raise consciousness and foster self-discovery among women.

While moving beyond the documentary mode of autobiography, these new women's novels also become increasingly experimental. The first of these innovative—and controversial—novels in search of new female identities (Rapisarda 90) was *Häutungen* (1975) by Swiss-born Verena Stefan. The book soon became a bestseller in feminist circles, selling over 100,000 copies by the end of the decade (Rapisarda 85). Yet

[17] As Wiggershaus explains, at that time the media as "opinion shaping industry" was still completely in the hands of men (120).

for Stefan, the "positive alternative" to established gender roles seemingly "lies in love between women," not a viable option for the majority of adult females (Rapisarda 85).[18]

Just as controversial, but in a different way was Karin Struck's *Die Mutter* (1975), which appeared in the same year as *Häutungen,* but which called not for lesbian love, but rather for "elevating the experience of motherhood and female sexuality in response to the denigration of the female body and the devaluation of the maternal" (Kraft and Kosta, "Critical Interventions" 72). While scholars consider both works examples of new "feminist" literature, they also exemplify the opposing approaches to motherhood developing within the women's movement by the mid-70s. They document the movement's fundamentally different lines of thought and its either/or policy concerning motherhood. On the one hand, narratives similar to Struck's literary representations value mothers and motherhood; on the other hand, stories supporting the abolishment of motherhood or images of women as negatively depicted mothers abound, with the latter evolving into the dominant form over time.

Yet as Manfred Jurgensen highlights in his study *Deutsche Frauenautoren der Gegenwart* (1983), no serious literature by women writers of the 1970s belongs in the category of the radical feminist literature that suggests that women should abandon motherhood. The scholar notes that the "the relationship between writing women and ideologically based feminism remains problematic" (17), and that a considerable amount of literature by female authors exists "that does not view itself as 'women's literature'" in

[18] In addition to Verena Stefan's *Häutungen: Autobiografische Aufzeichnungen, Gedichte, Träume, Analysen*, other highly visible novels of the time are, for instance, Christa Reinig's *Entmannung: Die Geschichte Ottos undseiner vier Frauen*, and Brigitte Schwaiger's, *Wie Kommt Das Salz Ins Meer?: Roman,* to name just a few.

the sense of the new feminist literature (18).[19] His study thus examines both feminist writers such as Christa Reinig and more traditional women authors such as Gabriele Wohmann, whose works are not intended to propound feminist ideologies, but rather to examine "ordinary" female experiences. Jurgenson stresses that the latter group still shows marriage and family as "reference point and pillar for the individual," no matter how much these institutions might be considered threatening "a woman's self-actualization" (21).[20] Most importantly in reference to my analysis in this chapter, he suggests this differentiation accounts for the nuances in the period's literature written by women. Jurgenson views writers like Wohmann as addressing readers interested in the middle tier between radical feminist writing trying to be serious literature and the "conformal literature for the woman, as it finds its ways into the hands of a female mass audience in form of trivial novels, 'dime novels' or even as serialized novels in the big journals and illustrated magazines" (9).[21]

This distinction between a serious and a middle tier of women's literature is not always received favorably. According to feminist author Angelika Mechtel, middle-tier literature that still values marriage and family endangers the progress of adult females in finding new alternative identities as much as conventional mass literature. Thus, she claims to present in her works only adult females who suffer from "the egoistic and

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[19] Jurgensen's original text reads "das Verhältnis schreibender Frauen zum ideolgisch ausgerichteten Feminismus bleibt problematisch" (17) and "die sich keineswegs als 'Frauenliteratur' begreifen" (18).
[20] Jurgensen's original read "Bezugspunkt und Stütze des Individuums" and "die Selbstverwirklichung der Frau" (21).
[21] Jurgensen's original reads "Konformliteratur für die Frau, wie sie als Trivialromane, in 'Heftchen-Reihen' oder als Fortsetzungsromane in den großen Zeitschriften und Illustrierter . . . in die Hände eines . . . weiblichen Massenpublikums gelangt" (9).

purely material interests of their petit-bourgeois family, which sees the woman merely as producer of offspring" (Laurien 117-18).[22] In her polemic "Der weiße Rabe hat fliegen gelernt," published in the weekly magazine *Die Zeit* in 1976, the same year as Feigenwinter's *Manifest der Mütter,* Mechtel writes that, in the past, "a woman, who wrote a woman's novel was likely declared by critics to be a relative of Courths-Mahler" (Der weiße Rabe 49).[23] Hence, she believes that the new generation of female authors aiming to foment social change necessarily needed to distance themselves from everything that traditional women's novels stand for, because of the inherent danger that women's novels can be dismissed as trivial (Rapisarda 82).

For Mechtel, this danger lies not only in the themes of these novels, but also in stylistics. Consequently, her own writing displayed "intellectual-difficult forms of representation" that "could only be understood by a limited audience" (Laurien 117).[24] Yet Mechtel also claimed in a 1972 interview that her "style really is not that complicated," and that even her cleaning lady recently had borrowed one of her books to read (Schlumberger 30).[25] Only two years later, in an open letter to booksellers entitled "Literarischer Erfolg, aber kaum Leser," however, the writer admits her topics and stylistic features caused her to "have found hardly any readers" (1044), despite her

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[22] Laurien's original text reads "die egoistischen und rein materiellen interessen ihrer kleinbürgerlichen Familie, die die Frau nur als Produzentin des Stammhalters sieht" (Laurien 117-18).

[23] Mechtel writes in the original article "Eine Frau, die einen Frauenroman schrieb, wurde von der Kritik gern in die Verwandtschaft zu Courths-Mahler abgeschoben." See"Der weiße Rabe hat fliegen gelernt," in *Die Zeit* 16 September 1976: 49.

[24]Laurien's original text reads "der nur einem begrentzten Publikum verständlich sein konnte" (117).

[25]The German original in Heila Schlumberger's interview "Autoren der Gegenwart: Angelika Mechtel." in *Münchner Abendzeitung* 24 Jan. 1972: 30 reads "Mein Stil ist nämlich gar nicht so kompliziert. Neulich hat sich sogar meine Putzfrau den Roman geben lassen."

novels' attested literary quality.[26] As her 1974 letter explains, she consequently wanted to work together with booksellers and follow their suggestions in order to appeal to a broader audience, while "producing literature without the loss of commitment, without giving up the point of view, but to accommodate the readers to the degree that they will not shy away from a literary novel" (1044).[27] Thus Mechtel knows her books are not reader friendly for an ordinary audience, and she declares herself willing to "accommodate" her audience—but only to the point that her works stay "literary novels," and do not turn into the trivialities of "popular literature" that she sees the bulk of women's literature producing. For Mechtel, such writing is the nemesis of women's social progress.

Consequently, serious literature attractive for a great many readers is what Mechtel wants to write. Her fellow author Gabriele Wohmann writes such novels, but with one caveat: thematically, her serious novels still value marriage and the family, which, in Mechtel's opinion, makes them no better than pulp fiction romances. For that reason, in her critical analyses in "Der weiße Rabe hat fliegen gelernt," Mechtel links Wohmann to such trivial women's literature. She integrates multiple titles of Wohmann's most popular novels into her text, using them as puns,[28] something contemporaneous

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[26] The German original in Angelika Mechtel's open letter "Literarischer Erfolg, aber kaum Leser" reads "Ich hatte Erfolg bei den Kritikern mit meinen literarischen Arbeiten, aber kaum Leser gefunden (wie die Verlagsabrechnung zeigte)."

[27] The original reads "Literatur ohne Verlust des Engagements zu produzieren, den Standpunkt nicht aufzugeben, dem Leser aber soweit entgegenzukommen, daß er seine Scheu vor dem literarischen Buch ablegen kann."

[28] For example regarding Wohmann's novel *Schönes Gehege*, Mechtel uses the word plays "die Gehegte im Gehege" or to refer to Wohmann as a female exception belonging to the primary male literary establishment "ein schönes Gehege voll liebevoll gepflegter Ausnahmeerscheinungen." See Angelika Mechtel, "Der weiße Rabe hat fliegen gelernt."

readers certainly would have noticed, especially given the large advertisement for five of Wohmann's novels directly below the article.[29] In doing so, Mechtel frames radical feminist narratives as the only "serious" women's literature and condemns texts articulating a subtler critique of women's role in society—no matter how sophisticated they may be—as trivial. Ironically, at this point, feminist critics have partially supplanted the male publishers who, as in Böll's case in the 1950s, prescribed to authors the way women and mothers could be written about. In the late 1970s and 1980s, radical feminists like Mechtel, who served as the Vice President of the West German Pen Cub from 1983 to 1991, had a forum in which they could promote their views among fellow writers [30]

Polarizing positions regarding serious women's literature subverted their potential social capital to create a rupture in the dominant social imaginary about mothers. By rejecting literature about mothers as "trivial," the 1968 women's movement in Germany failed to generate new representations of women's roles. The "ivory tower politics" of the movement criticized by voices like Feigenwinter were thus reaffirmed on the level of women's literature by Mechtel's article, linking positive representations of motherhood to trivial literature and negative images to serious writing. Young women writers were arguably influenced by these dicta, as well as by the consequences that clearly would have to be borne by an author who did not conform to the new standards for serious women's literature, as the subsequent case study shows.

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[29] Literary critic Cettina Rapisarda, however, neglects to mention this in her essay "Women's Writing, 1968-1980."

[30] See Albert von Schirnding on Mechtel's role as Vice President of the West German Pen Club from 1983 to 1991 in his article "Gegen Eis und Flut" *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 10 Feb. 2000: 16.

From the late 1970s onward, the majority of narratives by left-wing intellectual writers no longer depict mothering as a natural female attribute, but, rather, as a culturally learned process, influenced by male-dominated power structures. Along these lines, the traditional family is most often castigated as a negative environment. Consequently, the narratives of the next generation of feminist authors in the 1980s generally fail to provide positive representations of mothers and motherhood. Numerous novels even draw out toxic mother-daughter relationships, showing extremely abusive mothers, as the famous examples of Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983) and Waltraud Anna Mitgutsch's *Die Züchtigung* (1985) illustrate. Hence, unlike in novels of the late 1960s, where literary mother figures were predominantly cast as victims, the literary mothers of the 1980s become perpetrators.

Most significantly, however, as Emily Jeremiah's extensive study *Troubling Maternity: Mothering, Agency, and Ethics in Women's Writing in German of the 1970s and 1980s* (2003) documents, the radical texts of this era failed to provide positive alternative identities for adult women.[31] While the narratives generally articulate a more outspoken critique in respective to the social role of mothers, the majority of the thirteen primary texts Jeremiah investigates still do not enable readers to envision a different future other than to become a married stay-at-home mother.[32] The only exceptions within

[31] In this regard Jeremiah's study thus adds to the same findings of earlier analyses, for instance Katharina Aull's *Verbunden und gebunden. Mutter-Tochter-Beziehungen in sechs Romanen der siebziger und achtziger Jahre.*

[32] The thirteen primary texts Jeremiah discusses are Irmtraud Morgner's *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura* (1974) *and Amanda. Ein Hexenroman* (1983), Karin Struck's *Die Mutter* (1975),Barbara Frischmuth's *Die Mystifikationen der Sophie Silber* (1976) as well as *Amy oder die Metamorphose* (1978) and *Kai und die Liebe zu den Modellen* (1979), Margot

this group of texts are perhaps the novels by Barbara Frischmuth, an Austrian writer.[33] Her narrative *Die Mystifikationen der Sophie Silber* (1976) and its sequels present new ideas of kinship and filiation that grant women more agency and independence from men. Nonetheless, the novel's plot and its magical setting contributed little to facilitate a rethinking of motherhood that could be applied to the everyday reality of women seeking employment as means of becoming independent from men, a significant issue for a great number of West German women.

Overall, novels of the 1970s and '80s ignored a contemporaneous female readership in search of broader identities that could encompass the primacy of family and children. That relatively extensive number of readers could not identify with the either/or of new women's literature, thereby limiting, for example, the comparatively small group of women who chose to read Mechtel. Young writers who wanted to be taken seriously and get published as "serious women's fiction" had little choice but to portray mothers and motherhood negatively. Yet this situation left female readers uninterested in such narratives little choice but to turn to literature that was really trivial (nonserious), which did not challenge traditional gender roles at all.

In this sense, the tactics of Mechtel and her peers who joined her in devaluating the maternal in West German literature may have achieved the opposite of what they had aimed for, namely extinguishing serious women's fiction that did not espouse radical

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Schroeder's *Der Schlachter empfiehlt noch immer Herz* (1976), Erica Pederetti's *Veränderungen oder Die Zertrümerung von dem Kind Karl und anderen Personen* (1977), Maja Beutler's *Fuss fassen* (1980) Andrea Wolfmayr's *Spielräume* (1981), Gisela Elsner's *Abseits* (1982), Anna Mitgutsch's *Ausgrenzung* (1989) and Elfriede Jelinek's *Lust* (1989).

[33] As Jeremiah's study reveals, particularly the novels and stories originating in the in the 1970s and 1980s by Austrian writers depict mothers as violating traditional expectations tied to motherhood.

critiques of the patriarchy. Instead, they contributed to an increasing gap between mainstream and avant-garde literature by and for women, and encouraged a great many female readers to turn toward "trivial" literature. Given the landscape of available images for women and the family that Böll and his peers drew on a generation earlier, this decision was questionable, because the new standards for serious women's fiction may actually have prevented positive, modern image of women with children from emerging. Consequently, feminist writers effectively (and ironically) perpetuated the limited selection of socially acceptable roles for adult women, instead of broadening them.

Yet Gabriele Wohmann's case provides documentation that it was indeed possible in that era to write serious woman's literature that was not radically feminist and antipatriarchal in the activist sense. As argued in the next section, her work managed to occupy that middle tier and achieve success among readers of serious fiction, to some degree even supporting new roles for women, but, significantly, without demanding that they become radically divergent as a result.

Paulinchen war allein zu Haus: A Women's Literature Case Study

Gabriele Wohmann (1932-2015) was indeed a prominent West German women writer of the postwar period, a voice focusing on the representation of the private sphere in its relation to society's mechanisms of oppression, but one that nonetheless criticized the radical feminism of her day. Born in 1932 as Gabriele Guyot, the author grew up as the third of four children of a Protestant pastor, who, aside from preaching, also acted as

director of a great number of hospitals operated by the Protestant Church, as her biographer Ilka Scheidgen notes (8-9).[34] Subject to daily harassment as an opponent of the regime during the Nazi era, but unwilling to betray his beliefs, he instigated a strong faith-based spirit of resistance as well as perseverance in Gabriele and her siblings (15-16). Simultaneously, the close-knit family provided shelter from the hostile outside world (16): their "tolerant, musical, and intellectually highly ambitious household" (9) was a place without rules and limitations (11), but with a feeling of security and an atmosphere of trust (10). When, immediately after the war, Wohmann wanted to leave the nest in favor of going to a boarding school for a year in her late teens, because "she just wanted to go someplace else for a while," her parents, who according to the author "never said no to anything," thus fully supported her (29).

Her family's moral and financial support continued even long after she married fellow-student Reiner Wohmann at age twenty-one. Living with her parents, the couple was not pressured to take on any employment, and Gabriele could focus solely on writing. After years of writing only for the family audience, however, her husband eventually decided in 1957 that it was time to publish Wohmann's work, and so he submitted several of her short stories to the prestigious literary magazine *Akzente* (34).[35] Subsequently, the young female author became an instant success with readers, and in the

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[34] For a detailed biography based on interviews with the writer, see Ilka Scheidgen, *Gabriele Wohmann. Ich muss neugierig bleiben. Eine Biographie*. Scheidgen published extensively on Wohmann over the course of more than twenty years and offers more in-depth information on particular aspects of Wohmann's life and work in addition to the biography. See her list of publications on the author and the most recent overview of all significant secondary literature on Wohmann (234-36).

[35] *Akzente* was one of the few literary magazines during this time that would actually publish texts by women writers, even from those female authors who had no access to Group 47. See Meyer "Women's Writing," 47.

following year alone, she published more than sixty short stories and two books (35). Wohmann continued to publish an incredible number of novels, short stories, radio- and television plays, and even poetry over the course of the next decades.[36] She became a member of Group 47, and by the early 1960s she was the most visible West German female writer, part of Germany's established and well-known male author coterie,[37] a member of the PEN club, and recipient of numerous literary prizes. Yet for today's feminist literary scholars, her work has largely fallen from view.

Part of Wohmann's issue probably lies in the fact that could not have achieved all this without the help of influential men.[38] For instance, as a letter dated September 30, 1960 from Richter to Dr. Baumgart and Dr. Vorkamp documents, publisher Klaus Piper arranged for her to be invited by Hans Werner Richter to her first Group 47 meeting by these two lectors of the Piper publishing house. Moreover, Piper wanted to know in advance what she was going to read in front of the group,[39] in order to make sure that the reading would go well. Wohmann's successful debut with Group 47 and her ensuing popularity was thus no coincidence, but, rather, carefully orchestrated and monitored.

In addition, the young writer soon found a strong supporter of her work in Marcel Reich-Ranicki, one of the most influential critics in West Germany's postwar literary

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[36] See list of her publications in Heidi Rehn's bibliographical entry. .

[37] By the early sixties, a number of West German women were members of Group 47, for instance Gisela Elsner and Ruth Rehmann. However, none of them was so successful and visible than Wohmann. See Meyer, "Women's Writing" 49-50 and 58 as well as Rehn 1340.

[38] She thus falls into a category addressed by Joanna Russ in *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (1983).

[39] See letter from Klaus Piper to Dr. Baumgart and Dr. Vorkamp, 30 Sep. 1960 in Grey Folder Handschriften 98.5 A: Piper, Reinhard , "Verschiedenes/Verlagsnotizen über Wohmann, Gabriele 1957-1978," Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach. The original reads "Ich habe ihr gesagt, daß wir Hans Werner Richter anrufen würden, ob er bereit ist, Frau Wohmann zur Gruppe 47 einzuladen. Im Falle einer Zusage von Richter solle sie uns vorher dass zeigen, was sie lesen will."

scene. In fact, Reich-Ranicki became her private consulting editor, as letters from Wohmann to the critic reveal. She would send him her unpublished manuscripts and ask him to mark what he liked and what he thought should be left out. In a letter dating to December 18, 1973, for example, Wohmann writes "You will be able to judge everything better = correct. Please, if you think it is good—or not for whatever reasons—mark it. . . . But would you leave the "nice parents" alone if you make cuts? The people die after all."[40] Reich-Ranicki not only frequently edited Wohmann's manuscripts, also contributing to title selection, he also helped the writer publish excerpts of her novels in the newspaper he worked for, the *FAZ*.

This situation also applies to *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus*. Wohmann wrote to Reich-Ranicki on March 4, 1974:

> Finally, here is some prose from my ongoing production; 2 pieces that belong to the book that I am about to sign a contract for with the Luchterhand publishing house, so it can come out in fall '74. We spoke about it recently. . . . The title for this child-book, not a children's book, will probably be "Paulinchen war allein zu Haus." I will leave the choice of title for the two parts of the text to you, but not because of laziness. You can do it better, among other reasons. Please, return the MSS soon (!?)?[41]

Just as in the previous letter, Wohmann tells the critic he knows "better" than she does

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[40] See letter from Gabriele Wohmann to Reich-Ranicki, 18 Dec. 1973 in Grey Folder Handschriften 03.2.488 A: Reich-Ranick, Marcel "Briefe an Marcel Reich Ranick von Wohmann, Gabriele 1-17," Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach. The original reads "Sie werden alles besser = richtig beurteilen können. Bitte, wenn Sie es für gut halten—oder nicht aus was für Gründen auch immer—machen Sie Striche. . . . Würden Sie mir aber die "lieben Eltern" bei Kürzungen erhalten? Die Menschen sterben ja."

[41] See letter from Gabriele Wohmann to Reich-Ranicki, 4 March 1974 in Grey Folder Handschriften 03.2.488 A: Reich-Ranick, Marcel "Briefe an Marcel Reich Ranick von Wohmann, Gabriele 1-17," Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach. The original reads: Hier ist endlich mal Prosa aus der laufenden Produktion; es sind 2 Stücke, die zu dem Buch gehören, über das ich demnächst mit dem Luchterhand Verlag einen Vertrag mache, damit es im Herbst 74 erscheinen kann. Wir redeten neulich davon . . . Dieses Kind-Buch, kein Kinderbuch, wird wahrscheinlich heißen 'Paulinchen war allein zu Haus'. Für die beiden Textteile habe ich Ihnen Titelwahlen überlassen, aber bestimmt nicht aus Faulheit. Sie können es besser, unter anderem. Bitte, schicken Sie mir die Mss bald (?!) zurück?"

what is good or not regarding her writing and waits for him to return the manuscript, so she can incorporate his suggested edits. In fact, as Wohmann reveals in an interview with Alfred Starkmann for the daily newspaper *Die Welt* late in her career, she also readily adapted all of her texts' contents to her publishers' suggestions "in order for them to sell better."[42] Wohmann was by no means the only author to adopt such policies and she never denied her objectives. Morris-Farber claims Wohmann never attempted "to veil her concern about financial success" ("Sociological Implication" 296). In fact, interviews with her supposedly often included the fact that "she [was] at pains to call even a relatively short book a novel," because "books billed as novels sell better than those called stories" ("Sociological Implication" 296). Furthermore, according to Morris-Farber, Wohmann was very well aware of the connection between favorable reviews, access to a large audience, and sales figures ("Sociological Implication" 296). Her relation to Reich-Ranicki brought her all of this.

A few weeks after sending him the excerpts of *Paulinchen*, the selected parts of the novel came out in the *FAZ*, and on April 25, 1974, Wohmann wrote Reich-Ranicki a "thank you" letter.[43] Whether such a close collaboration between author and critic was the norm or not might be debatable and could make for an interesting topic for future research—yet it provides concrete evidence of what is meant by the "significant

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[42] See Interview with Alfred Starkmann in *Die Welt* 23 Feb. 1998: 9. Wohmann admits that she integrates all her publisher's suggestions into her narratives "damit sie sich besser verkaufen lassen." In one instance that even meant to put in a sex scene, to accommodate reader's expectations after the "sex-wave" of the 1960s.

[43] See letter from Gabriele Wohmann to Reich-Ranicki, 25 April 1974 in Grey Folder Handschriften 03.2.488 A: Reich-Ranick, Marcel "Briefe an Marcel Reich Ranick von Wohmann, Gabriele 1-17." Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach. The original reads: "Ich wollte mich bei Ihnen für den Paulinchen Abdruck bedanken…"

influence" attributed to Reich-Ranicki as a critic and arbiter of public taste. Without a doubt, however, it proved to be very beneficial for Wohmann's career: previews of her novels as well as book reviews would regularly show up in the Feuilleton of the *FAZ*, one of the most important of its kind, granting her the necessary exposure to reach a large potential readership. Almost needless to add is the fact that, in contrast to the majority of her peers, not a single bad review of any of Wohmann's works appeared in the *FAZ*, neither by Reich-Ranicki, nor by any of his colleagues. That fact set her onto a commercial track, including the distribution of "her books as a Book-of-the-Month-Club choice or alternate" (Morris-Farber, "Sociological Implications" 293), available to virtually none of her female peers (Ingeborg Bachmann, an Austrian, may have been an exception), and onto a track that allows us to consider her work as part of serious but mainstream literary sensibilities.

However, like a great many West German (female) authors of the early 1970s, Wohmann had also started experimenting with innovative stylistic forms, for instance long inner monologues and collage-montage technique (Morris-Farber, "Sociological Implications" 292). In contrast to her contemporaries, Wohmann emphasizes that she did not aim for "a distinctly feminine way of writing," something she calls absurd (Reif 35).[44] In addition, she also claimed not to be interested in merely writing "about women's problems (Reif 35).[45] Rather, Wohmann seems to be interested in the relationships between children and adults, which can be found in combination with her other

[44] The original in Reif's interwiew with Gabriele Wohmann reads "eine spezielle Frauenschreibweise finde ich albern" (35).
[45] The original in Reif's interwiew with Gabriele Wohmann reads "Ich will auch nicht nur über Frauenprobleme schreiben" (35).

reoccurring motifs such as loneliness, suffering, desperation, fear, and guilt.[46] This combination also characterizes her novel *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* (1974), as the following plot summary illustrates.

This project is placed at the heart of Germany's literary traditions espoused by the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The novel's title references the famous German children's book *Der Struwwelpeter* (1844),[47] which includes a story about a girl named Paulinchen who burned to death, because she disregarded her parent's rules when they left her at home unsupervised. Wohmann's Paulinchen is also "left at home," but she is not guilty of disobeying any parental injunctions. Christa and Kurt, the supposedly free-spirited adoptive parents of the eight-year-old orphan Paula, from whose perspective the narrative is told, do not set any specific rules—let alone give any examples of what might happen, if rules are broken, as *Der Struwwelpeter* does. They are examples of 1970s permissive parenting rather than of traditional German child-rearing norms. The journalist couple that adopted Paula wants her to grow up free from all the restrictions of bourgeois life, many of which the girl had experienced while living temporarily with her grandparents after her parents and siblings died in a car crash.

Yet Paula's new home is still fraught with dangers for the girl. The child faces undefined "consequences" (60),[48] if she does not behave as what they consider could be expected of a "reasonable individual" (9).[49] She is sanctioned if she refuses to give up her

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[46] See Rehn, "Wohmann, Gabriele" 1340 and Scheidgen, *Gabriele Wohmann* 50.
[47] Past scholars looking at the novel made the same association, for instance Hans Wagener (46).
[48] The original reads "Maßnahmen" (60).
[49] The original reads "vernünftiger Mensch" (9).

old, dirty doll in exchange for "didactical-functional" (48) toys, or if she declines to eat the exotic food the adults prefer over the meals "of the last century's cuisine" (58),[50] the food Paula is used to. Supposedly reflecting the latest antiauthoritarian child-raising principles, Christa and Kurt initiate lengthy discussions, during which they hope to bring Paula to realize her "mistakes" and thereafter adjust her behavior. The child, not surprisingly, is confused about the adults' mysterious expectations in a world allegedly without rules, and she has difficulties adapting. Consequently, as Christa guiltily admits, her frustration with Paula at times reaches a breaking point at which she cannot stop herself from hitting the child (87).[51] Yet these actions coupled with the lack of transparent rules are not the only circumstances contributing to Paula's insecurity and growing desperation.

Indicative of their system of enforced "freedoms," the adoptive parents are unable to provide Paula with unconditional love and emotional support the lonely child longs for. Not only do both of them focus on their careers, leaving little time for the girl, but they also treat Paula more like a study object than a human being. Especially the ambitious Christa, a writer, who "wanted to move very far ahead [in her career]" even "collected material about her experiences with the child," which she eventually would like to turn into a book one day (63).[52] Kurt, in contrast, seems at least from time to time genuinely aware of and interested in Paula's feelings. His efforts to reach out to the child,

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[50] The original German reads "aus der Küche des vorigen Jahrhunderts" (58).
[51] In a conversation with friends, the character thus admits "mir rutscht schon manchmal die Hand aus" (87).
[52] The original reads "sie wollte noch viel weiterkommen . . . sogar gerade durch das Kind. Sie sammelte Material über die Erfahrungen mit dem Kind. Das würde vielleicht ein Buch" (63).

however, remain limited to the times when Christa is absent. As soon as his wife returns from a meeting, an evening out, or work-related travel, everything turns back to "normal." That is, until Paula, who after three years has given up any hope for a structured life and a loving family, decides to end her suffering by leaving her adoptive parents for a more appealing (because predictive and safe) environment: a boarding school. Capitalizing on her status as a problem child, Paula assures her adoptive parents that, in a case like hers, "boarding school is the last resort. There such a child will turn into a reasonable individual" (230).[53] As this is, after all, what Christa and Kurt want the most, they let her go. Nonetheless, by the end of the novel, Kurt feels as if they perhaps failed as parents.

Although written twenty years later, *Paulinchen* shares significant commonalties with Böll's *Haus ohne Hüter*. Most importantly, both works portray independent mother figures who are unable to provide their children with the most basic needs, such as appropriate food, love, and parental guidance. Compared to the novels of the Nazi era, which seemingly valued strong female protagonists who embraced parenting and raising their children, providing supportive guidance and positive and responsive role models (commonly as single parents), these novels' postwar women are depicted as incompetent to do so. At the same time, the male protagonists appear to be equipped with at least some of the characteristics necessary for securing a positive upbringing for the children. They can do so, but only if they replace the dominant mother figures and take control.

[53] The original reads"daß in einem Fall wie meinem das Internat die letzte Rettung ist. Dort wird so ein Kind ein vernüftiger Mensch" (230).

Hence, Wohmann's narrative constitutes an important artifact with which to clarify competing discourses about women's roles in West Germany's late 1960s and '70s, an era when women were ostensibly demanding the right to self-realization. Paradoxically, the various representations of mothers in *Paulinchen* depict women who are valued most when they become dependent, stay-at-home mothers who eschew personal development.

The critical reception at time of publication, however, reads *Paulinchen* primarily as cautionary tale about fashionable fads in antiauthoritarian child rearing, arguing it as "the flipside of deadly lovelessness" instead of a paradise (Burger 88).[54] Reviewed in thirteen daily newspapers and three periodicals, most of these book commentaries did in fact focus on the novel's depiction of "dogmatic anti-authoritarianism in childrearing" (Morris-Farber, "Critical Reception" 52, 122). While female book reviewers often stressed the inherent danger of a book that would serve a conservative, authoritarian agenda, [55] the majority of (male) reviews in contrast "were interested and positive, for they have found the message of Pchen [Paulinchen] clear, as well as entertainingly presented" (124).[56]

Literary critics, too, found that Wohmann's critique of the "'progressive' family is so obvious that an interpretative summary of the novel's content is unnecessary" (Jurgensen 153). Highlighting both the novel's purportedly clear message and its presentation, journalist Hans Fröhlich praises Wohmann because "[s]he advocates for the

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[54] The German original reads "die Kehrseite einer tödlichen Lieblosigkeit." See Burger 88.

[55] See for instance Elsbeth Pulver "Nicht nur ein Buch über Erziehung" and Heidi Gideon "Erziehung als Geschwätz-eine Rezension."

[56] See for instance Egon Mayer's review "Paulinchen's Erziehung: Zu Gabriele Wohmanns neuem Roman" in *Badische Zeitung* 19 /20 Apr. 1975 or K.H. Kramberg's article "Schlechte Kinderstube. Eine pädagogische Satire von Gabriele Wohmann" in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 26 /27 Apr. 1975.

simple, normal, positive. And she does so in a language comprehensible also for those who are not educational and cultural acrobats" (18).[57] Still, a small number of reviewers did comment on Wohmann's satirical presentation of the content as well as her use of new literary techniques, but evaluated them as awkward (Morris-Farber, "Critical Reception" 123).

Remarkably, however, not a single review commented on Wohmann's critique of the contemporaneous fashionable trend of adopting children and its related difficulties, especially regarding the potentially negative outcome on children. Beginning in January 1973, West Germany's most popular women's magazine *Brigitte*, for instance, featured in each issue a child available for adoption,[58] who was briefly described and accompanied by a picture. In issue number two from January 18, 1974, for example, readers encountered the bold headline, "A father needs to take care of Philipp," over a picture of a sad looking little boy. The explicit need for a father is explained in the main text as follows: "The boy is looking for a father figure and trusts a man substantially faster than he does a woman."[59] Such discourses that emphasize the father's role in securing a positive upbringing for children resemble what Wohmann describes in her novel—and it is striking that they appear in a woman's magazine that otherwise appears to accept

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[57] See interview by Hans Fröhlich. The original reads "Sie setzt sich für das Einfache, Normale, Positive ein. Und das tut sie in einer Sprache, verstehbar auch für jene, die keine Bildungs- und Kulturakrobaten sind."

[58] As documented in the magazine's mastheads, *Brigitte* had a circulation of about 1.5 million copies every two weeks during the time examined, which is higher than any other contemporaneous women's magazine. The feminist magazine *Emma* on the other hand, started its initial circulation in 1977 with 200,000 copies, but has since then constantly decreased to currently only about 43,000 issues every two months. See Alexandra Kühte's *Das Frauenbild der feministischen Zeitschrift Emma*.

[59] See "Holt die Kinder aus den Heimen" in *Brigitte*, 18 January 1974: 73. The original headline reads "Um Philipp muss sich ein Vater kümmern" and the texts states "Der Junge sucht sehr stark nach einem Vaterbild und bringt einem Mann wesentlich schneller Vertrauen entgegen als seiner Frau."

mothering as an unquestionable female prerogative.

Interested readers could contact the magazine and subsequently adopt the child. However, these adoptions were often challenging for the children, particularly because adopters, similar to Christa and Kurt, were often not adequately prepared for what awaited them or had simply inappropriate expectations.[60] The magazine did its follow-ups. In issue number three from January 1, 1974, *Brigitte* thus urged its readers to carefully consider the decision to adopt, above all regarding whether the future parents would have the necessary "psychological qualifications" needed to care for a child.[61] As is asserted in Wohmann's narrative, the magazine clearly thought that adopters trained in children's psychology and pedagogy would be better prepared to raise children.

On the other hand, with future parents better equipped to offer a home to these "problem children" the magazine had another agenda: it wanted to lower the number of children who were eventually returned to orphanages and whose negative experiences even resulted in a number of them not willing to be adopted again.[62] Just as Wohmann's Paula preferred to go to a strict boarding school rather than remain in a home full of double messages, the youngsters addressed in the magazine seemingly preferred living in an orphanage over being adopted by "self-righteous goody two-shoes" (Rohlf 33).[63]

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[60] This seems to anticipate Günter Grass' *Kopfgeburten, oder die Deutschen sterben aus* (1980), another story about a couple ambivalent about child-raising.

[61] See "'Holt die Kinder aus den Heimen'" in *Brigitte*, 1 February 1974: 52. The original talks about "die psychologischen Voraussetzungen".

[62] See "Zwei Jahre Brigitte Aktion "'Holt die Kinder aus den Heimen'" in *Brigitte*, 10 May 1974: 85. About 20% of children ended up returned and had traumatic experiences that caused them to wish not to be available for adoption anymore.

[63] The original reads "selbstgerechte Gutmenschen". See Sabine Rohlf "Das Glück und der böse Blick. Zum Tod der Schriftstellerin Gabriele Wohmann" in *Frankfurter Rundschau* 24 June 2015: 33.

Given the existence of such visible public discussions in the popular women's media, Wohmann's narrative may well be construed as aiming at more than entertainment. Her book not only explores the possible downside of antiauthoritarian child rearing, it also suggests a serious critique of contemporaneous adoption practices that treated children as objects that could be returned or handed off to a boarding school, if they did not fulfill the adopters' (=consumers') expectations. However, as mentioned above, these facets of Wohmann's novel were not publicly discussed in the reviews at all. Yet despite some negative reviews (notably not in the *FAZ*), *Paulinchen* sold well: as in the case of Böll's *Haus ohne Hüter*, the readers saw something that most media assessments did not—possibly, for example, *Paulinchen*'s critique of Germany's then-current child-rearing and adoption practices.

A further thorn in the side of reviewers was Wohmann's focus on the representation of the private sphere as a space in which an author could investigate women's roles in society. The author's approach was judged too "insubstantial" for effective social criticism on a large scale (Morris-Farber123).[64] This critique, made predominantly by female reviewers and literary critics,[65] ignored the fact that *Paulinchen* does address society's mechanisms of oppression, [66] which became visible precisely in

[64] This reflects Nina Morris-Farber's observation that only one reviewer actually considered the novel in its political dimension. See her "Critical Reception" And this is precisely what happened to famous authors like Jane Austen; see again Joanna Russ.

[65] See Barbara Höpping, "Nörgelei statt Zorn: Gabriele Wohmanns altkluges Paulinchen" in *Rheinischer Merkur* 11 Oct. 1974: 13.

[66] The notion same might be applied to Möhrmann in the case of Böll.

the private sphere and the family circle, as later critics maintain.[67] Manfred Jurgensen points out that Paulinchen "shows a social and thus in the end also a political concern" (154).[68] Moreover, in the case of feminists, as Günter Häntzschel explains, there appears to be yet another reason for their overwhelmingly expressed dislike for *Paulinchen* at the time of publication: the author's bitter criticism of "the allures of emancipation for the in-crowd'" (41),[69] which they correctly interpreted as an attack on the emerging feminist movement. While book reviewer Ilse Leitenberger sees in the novel generally "the final settlement with two intellectuals [Christa and Kurt] of our times" (5),[70] Cettina Rapisarda believes that *Paulinchen* targets feminists in particular, because Wohmann's novels are supposedly always "written at a clear distance from the women's movement" (95) and contrast "in almost textbook fashion with certain predominant features of women's writing of this period . . . : the politicization of virtually all material, the key role of sexuality, and finally the uncompromisingly critical and untypical perspective on traditional preconceived ideas of feminine gentleness and conciliatoriness" (96). This statement certainly applies also to *Paulichen*. However, Manfred Jurgensen explains that, in this particular narrative more than in Wohmann's other novels, "the concept of an emancipated woman turns against itself through its pretentious portrayal and therefore

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[67] See Angelika Machinek, Heinz F. Schafroth,and Ingrid Laurien "Gabriele Wohmann." Most recently, the claim that society's mechanisms of oppression become the most visible precisely in the private sphere has also been very well documented by Carrie Smith-Prei in her book *Revolting Families: Toxic Intimacy, Private Politics, and Literary Realism in the German Sixties*. In fact, Wohmann's writing displays a great many similarities with works discussed by Smith-Prei. Note, too, that Austrian women's novels often focused on the domestic sphere as revealing structural problems in society. See for example, Brigitte Schwaiger's *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer?* (1977).

[68] The German original text by Jurgensen reads "ein gesellschaftlices und somit letztlich auch politisches Anliegen hat" (154).

[69] Günter Häntzschel calls it "Emazipationsgehabe der Schickeria" (41).

[70] Leitenberger's original reads "die Abrechnung mit zwei Intellektuellen unserer Tage" (5).

becomes a (intended) persiflage" of "self-complacent feminism" (155).[71] Unsurprisingly, feminist Alice Schwarzer subsequently accused Wohmann of "men-friendly" writing (Pivert 4),[72] a charge which may have been an indirect allusion to her association with Reich-Ranicki.

But it is not only Wohmann's writing that apparently upset members of the women's movement, it is also the author's openly negative attitude toward feminism's efforts to overcome established gender roles. In a 1975 interview entitled "Men aren't really that free either," for instance, Wohmann assumes a moderate position regarding the burdens of traditional parenting: "This devalorizing of the 'role' of housewife, wife, mother—I really don't know where that is coming from. Why people don't recognize that it [motherhood] is a tremendous job."[73] Although Wohmann does not directly label feminists as responsible for the devaluation of motherhood, a reader of the interview may well get this impression. All of which is not to say that Wohmann personally is unsympathetic to feminist ideas or points of view. Note that she is *not* claiming that the traditional role of women as mothers is natural, a role she could not picture herself in, as she explains in an interview with her biographer Scheidgen: "I would probably not have been a good mother with all my writing, and therefore I never really considered that

[71]The German original text by Jurgensen reads "das Konzept einer emanzipierten Frau richtet sich durch die pompöse Rhetorik seiner Darstellung wider sich selbst und gerät schließlich zur (beabsichtigten) Persiflage" of "eines selbstgefälligen Feminismus" (155).

[72] See interview with the Wohmann scholar Benoît Pivert. The original German reads "männerfreundlich schreiben" (4).

[73] See interview by Hans Fröhlich. The original reads "Diese Unterschätzung der 'Rolle' Hausfrau, Ehefrau, Mutter, ich weiß nicht woher die eigentlich kommt. Daß man nicht einsehen kann, daß das eine ganz große Arbeit ist, die da gemacht wird."

[having children]" (69).[74]

However, this observation raises an important issue relevant to my project. It suggests that Wohmann concurs with what was assumed about her middle-class readership at the time—that a woman has to decide between a career and raising a child, as she cannot be the traditional "good mother" when combining work and motherhood. Note, too, that US feminist publicity at the time would tally the costs of "services" that the non-wage-earning stay-at-home mother was providing her husband and child, as a way to combat the assumption that these women were parasitical—using up their wage-earning husbands' larger income in a zero-sum income gain.

With these media pronouncements, the writer became a red flag for all women interested in opening up new social roles for adult females, which explains why she became the primary target of prominent feminists, such as Angelika Mechtel and Alice Schwarzer. However, Mechtel's claim that Wohmann produced only trivial literature was not universally shared. While *Paulinchen*, as observed by reviewers, can easily be understood by a large readership, it still problematizes social issues, including the roles of women. But because Wohmann did support traditional roles as a *choice* for women, instead of radically criticizing them—similarly to Esther Vilar, the even more controversial writer and declared opponent of feminism at the time—progressive women authors like Mechtel argued for the abolishment of all women's literature that they considered reactionary and uncritical, and feminist literary circles thus excluded

[74] Wohmann said this in an interview with Ilka Scheidgen as part of her biography: "Ich wäre auch keine gute Mutter gewesen bei meinem Schreiben, daher kam das [Kinder] irgendwie nicht in Frage" (69).

Wohmann from their own media outlets in magazines such as *Emma* and *Courage*.[75]

At the same time, the Luchterhand publishing house, well known as an outlet for serious new women's literature, continued to publish Wohmann's novels until the late 1980s, at least in part because she was very popular with readers and her novels sold well. Reflecting the majority of positive book reviews at times of publication, [76] *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* was extremely well-received by a large readership of all ages.[77] In fact, the book turned into Wohmann's most popular publication (Scheidgen 133). The initial printing sold quickly, and within a year of publication the book had already seen four reprints (Morris-Farber, "Critical Reception" 24). By 1984, the fourteenth edition of the novel came out, and in 1999, twenty-five years after its first publication, the novel became available as a pocket book by Piper, documenting the novel's enduring popularity over decades.[78] *Paulinchen* was also the author's most successful novel abroad, and none of her other novels had been translated into as many languages, including Russian and Rumanian (Scheidgen 133). Based on the book's

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[75] Notably, according to journalist Esther Cornioley, Wohmann was even known to have worked together with Esther Vilar:."Gabriele Wohmann im Literarischen Forum: Kalter Frost" *Basler Nachrichten* 3 Nov. 1975: 11. Yet, in contrast to Vilar, Wohmann at least was not physically attacked by radical feminists. Ester Vilar was attacked and beat up by radical feminists in the bathrooms of the Munich *Staatbibliothek* . See Peer Teuwsen "Esther Vilar: 'Liebe macht unfrei'" *Die Weltwoche* 19 Dec. 2007, <http://www.weltwoche.ch/ausgaben/2007-51/artikel-2007-51-liebe-macht-unfr.html>.

[76] According to Morris-Farber, with the exception of the *FAZ*, whose review was more ambivalent, all major German newspapers, such as *Die Welt*, *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Zeit*—and also the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*—favorably reviewed the novel (*Critical Reception* 163-97).

[77] Wohmann indeed attracted readers of all ages as an article covering one of her lectures 1974 in Mannheim documents, which also stresses that Wohmann received only positive feedback for her *Paulinchen* from the audience. See Elle "Paulinchen und andere."

[78]A search in WorldCat, the world's largest network of library content and services, shows sixty-three German language editions of the book, see <https://www.worldcat.org/title/paulinchen-war-allein-zu-haus-roman/oclc/1136921/editions?cookie=&start_edition=1&sd=asc&se=yr&referer=di&qt=show_more_yr%3A&editionsView=true&fq=&fc=yr%3A_25>.

immense success with a mainstream audience, the ZDF turned it into a telefilm directed by Anne Voss, which first aired in 1981 (Wagener 45), and since then had multiple reruns (Scheidgen 133).

In contrast to Mechtel, then, Wohmann thus did not have to ask booksellers for help in reaching a larger audience. Instead, she seemingly enlisted the help of influential men by using flattery, as in the case of Reich-Ranicki, to gain access to a large public forum for her works, translating into commercial success and turning her into one of the FRG's most popular female authors. Given her status as serious writer and many of her novels' lasting popularity over time, not just *Paulinchen*, it is worth noting that scholarly research has largely neglected Wohmann, especially her extremely popular *Paulinchen*. Similar to *Haus ohne Hüter*, one finds only short entries in bibliographies and handbooks that mention the book in one or two sentences,[79]and only a few brief essays are devoted to this widely read novel.[80] A single comprehensive study has yet to be produced. Perhaps, however, the lack of scholarly engagement with the feminism of a writer who has been decried in the past (Morris-Farber, "Critical Reception" 232) contributed to the scarcity of secondary literature about her work.[81] Although Wohmann "is one of the most

[79] See for instance Heidi Rehn's bibliographical entry "Wohmann, Gabriele." and the entry on Wohmann in Grange, *Historical Dictionary of Postwar German Literature*.

[80] The most notable ones are Knapp and Knapp's chapter on the novel in *Gabriele Wohmann* (88-99) and Burger 86-91. Yet other brief examinations exist, mostly situating the novel in the overall context of Wohmann's work, for instance Wagener's *Gabriele Wohmann* and Schultz-Gerstein's "Erziehungsstudio" (83-84).

[81] The overview of secondary literature in Thomas Scheuffelen, ed. *Gabriele Wohmann. Materialienbuch*, more recently by Guy Stern in his article "Gabriele Wohmann," and in Ilka Scheidgen, *Gabriele Wohmann* (234-35) all attest to the limited amount of scholarly literature on Wohmann, as does my own research. To put this in numbers: only about twenty monographs and edited volumes as well roughly fifty academic journal articles on the author exist, which is not only small compared to work on other female postwar

prolific writers of the postwar period, with well over 300 short stories published, 16 novels, and more than a dozen radio scripts and screenplays" (Grange 244), and whose works were mandatory literature for students taking the *Abitur*,[82] Wohmann's works are typically absent from scholarly discussions.

Especially noteworthy is the lack of scholarly secondary literature about the frequency with which she addressed the topic of women and their role in society.[83] Yet, as Rosvitha Frisen Blume in her 2007 study demonstrates, the explanation for this absence may be fairly simple. The majority of researchers publishing after the early 1980s do not classify Wohmann as a feminist author, and/or they have no interest in examining her oeuvre with regard to questions related to Women's and Gender Studies (48-51). Her appeal to audiences beyond dogmatic feminists has put her work outside the pale of serious study. Yet what Frisen Blume neglects to mention is that the scholars to whom this judgment applies are exclusively female literary critics close to West Germany's women's movement, scholars who, in the meantime, have dominated scholarly research on women writers. This caveat holds true for universities' Women's and Gender Studies departments in the United States. Apparently, Wohmann's status as a *persona non grata* among feminists resulted in the exclusion of her work from scholarly circles. Hence, since the early 1980s, Wohmann is usually mentioned only briefly in the

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writers, but also tiny given Wohmann's extensive number of publications and role in West Germany's literary scene.

[82] For instance, the three authors students could choose from for the written *Abitur* test in 1979 were Christa Wolf, Heinrich Heine, and Gabriele Wohmann. See "Die Abitur Dichterin war da: Gabriele Wohmann in Saarbrücken-Lesung und Diskussion" *Saarbrückener Zeitung* 18 Oct. 1979.

[83] Notable exceptions are Mona Knapp's "Zwischen den Fronten" (314-15); Wellner's *Leiden an der Familie,* Kraft and Kosta's "Mother-Daughter Relationships," and most significantly Blume's *Ein anderer Blick auf den bösen Blick.*.

contexts of Group 47,[84] as a writer of short stories and realist prose,[85] or, of course, as a writer who distanced herself from the women's movement.[86]

Any careful reading of *Paulinchen*, however, must counter this impression. Wohmann's work provides valuable insights into how motherhood was represented in her era and thus should not be disregarded solely on the basis of ideological grounds.

PAULINCHEN WAR ALLEIN ZU HAUS: NOT ALL MOTHERS ARE MOTHERLY

As presented thus far, Gabriele Wohmann's late postwar novel was written by a bourgeois author for an intended mainstream readership of the educated middle class,[87] and like *Haus ohne Hüter*, it has been little studied in the past. This lack of attention respectively to Wohmann's and Böll's narratives suggests that, for a long time, a great many scholars apparently were far less interested in these literary representations of the private sphere than the reading public was. While the latter seem have understood these fictional works centering on female identity construction as social critique, most researchers in the past—echoing book reviewers—seem to have considered this focus to be uncritical, unserious, or "insubstantial." The orphaned protagonist's surrogate parenting experience has to my knowledge been discussed only in analyses of the book's

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[84] See for instance Schnell 241 or Heinz Arnold, *Die Gruppe 47*.

[85] See for instance entries on these topics in the *Feminist Encyclopedia of German Literature*, edited by Friederike Eigler and Susanne Kord. Note that in contrast to Christa Wolf, Verena Stefan, and other women writers of her generation, Wohmann did not get her own entry in the book.

[86] See Meyer, "Women's Writing"58 and Rapisarda 95.

[87] As a member of Group 47 and the Pen Club, Wohmann produced literature for Germany's educated middle class. At the same time though, as Meyer lays out, mainstream critics praised Wohmann's book and recommended her works that appeared in large print runs to their broad audiences (58).

critique of antiauthoritarian childrearing principles. Existing examinations of the novel have focused on the author's language use, including the italicizing of reoccurring leitmotifs (e.g., Schultz-Gerstein, Knapp and Knapp, Wagener) and the unusual combination of child narrator communicating through a stream of consciousness (e.g., Knapp and Knapp, Häntzschel).

This section will focus instead on the public discourses at play during the time this novel was written in order to identify the range of available socially acceptable roles for women articulated to a mainstream readership after 1968. In tandem with references to the postwar breakdown in social norms, Wohmann's contemporaneous narrative continues to depict mothers and motherhood in black and white terms. There are few, if any, exceptions to this either/or dialectic.

Wohmann used a number of strategies to engage a readership that essentially lacks representation for the issues she wishes to discuss. Like Böll, she starts drawing her characters by utilizing oppositional adjectives, characteristics, and behaviors, differentiating *good* from *bad* mothers within the same social class. In doing so, the author portrays Paula's adoptive mother Christa in sharp contrast to other female protagonists with children, especially Paula's biological mother. The result is a range of images between *good* and *bad* mothers that are still stereotyped in familiar ways, but with reference to personal character traits of women sharing the same socioeconomic status rather than as traits that distinguish different socioeconomic classes.

In terms of physical appearance, for instance, Paula's birth mother is described as "chubby" (130) and "pudgy" (207), like Frau Bechstein, the mother of Paula's only

friends (168), whom Christa's narrative voice calls "a fat matron" (138) and " a fat clucking hen" (140),[88] while she on the other hand constantly watches calories and thus is "formless" (207). Directly related to the women's difference in weight is the food they cook. While Christa insists it is imperative "not to eat any heavy things, no creamed rice and no pea soup, especially *nothing of last century's cuisine*" (58),[89] and thus serves Paula Greek yogurt and carrot juice (57), the Bechstein children get "sandwiches piled high with blood sausage" (168) on weekdays and on "Sunday mornings and holidays, cake for breakfast" (138).[90] Paula envies her friends, especially with regard to the latter, because her equivalent Sunday brunch, brings simply "a meal the child could not stand at all" (68), because the girl associates it with "food chaos" (68).[91] Since "she longs for orderliness" (68) when it comes to meals,[92] Paula thus misses her biological mother, who used to prepare "a beautifully normal breakfast" (72), without "gourmet food" (72).[93]

As this textual evidence demonstrates, Wohmann contrasts the chaotic and exotic meals served by the "slender" Christa with the traditional food prepared by "fat" women, linked to orderliness and normality. While Paula prefers the calorie-heavy diet, readers, however, learn from Christa in free direct speech that supposedly "Every woman,

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[88] The German words used here are "rundlich" (130), "dicklich" (207) and (168), "eine dicke Matrone" (138), "fette Glucke" (140), and "formlos" (207).

[89] The original German reads "keine schweren Sachen zu essen, keinen Reisbrei und keine Erbsensuppe, erst recht nichts *aus der Küche des vorigen Jahrhunderts*" (58).

[90] The German originals read "sehr dick belegte Blutwurstbrote" (168) and "kriegen Sonntag morgens und in den Ferien Kuchen zum Frühstück" (138).

[91] The original German reads "Das Kind konnte diese Mahlzeit üerhaupt nicht ausstehen" (68) and "Eßchaos" (68).

[92] Paula talks about how she associates orderliness with brunch and how she "sehnte sich nach Ordentlichkeit" (68). This reference to traditional eating practices as "orderliness" highlights the rupture the child experiences in her new environment which fails to reinforce Paula's expectations about normal eating.

[93] The original text is "ein schön normales Frühstück," (72) without "Delikatessen"(72).

especially nowadays, wants to be slender, good looking, and she also has to, if she wants to have any chances of success in her job and also with men" (138).[94] Remarkably, a survey of 24 *Brigitte* issues dating to the time Wohmann's novel was written, which I conducted for this study, reveals that, in fact, every single working woman—ranging from factory worker to politician—portrayed in the magazine was slender, while the pictured housewives and mothers are either not slender or have only headshots. Within such media norms for visual images of mothers vis-à-vis working women, then, the author has verbalized common discursive representations of mothers in her novel by connecting thin "abnormal" females with employment, thus implying the "fat" women with children, representing the parenting norm, are stay-at home mothers. It is thus no coincidence that reviewer Hans Fröhlich, as mentioned above, argues Wohmann "advocates for the simple, normal, positive"—that is, stay-at-home mothers. Notably, Paula's narrative voice connects the pudgy mothers with emotional warmth,[95] to be precise *Nestwärme*, a concept that the "coldhearted" (116) Christa calls "outdated" (139).[96]

Consequently, Wohmann's text echoes the notion, frequently expressed in conservative postwar public discourses, that working mothers are unable to provide children with adequate love, affection, and attention. Christa is repeatedly depicted as not

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[94] The original German reads "Jede Frau, besonders heutzutage, möchte schlank sein, gut aussehen, und das muß sie auch, wenn sie irgendwelche Erfolgschancen im Berufsleben und auch bei Männern haben will" (138).

[95] Examples are for instance the "warm" mother (71) and the "warmherzige" (139) Frau Bechstein.

[96] The German reads "ohne jedes Gefühl"(116) and "Nestwärme ist überholt" (139).

spending enough time with the girl due to her work as writer.[97] This failure, in turn, explains why Paula, as the text suggests, is "homesick" for "creamed rice with sugar and cinnamon" (56),[98] comfort food for a child longing for the mundane normality of a stay-at-home mother. Christa is fundamentally uninterested in motherly duties. Her impetus for working is not based on financial need, but rather because "it is fun for her" (33), a narrative comment reinforced by Kurt's narrative voice informing the reader that she is "ambitious and almost possessed by work" (63). She prefers focusing on her professional identity over that of a mother.[99] The reader can only conclude that Christa is a woman who shouldn't have children.

Paula's adoptive father Kurt, in contrast to Christa, at least temporarily recognizes the needs of the child and makes efforts to reach out to her. For instance, "he sacrificed himself" (121) to see *La Bohème* with Paula, pretending he liked the opera (122).[100] In addition, he often recognizes the physical and emotional needs of the child. Thus, Paula's narrative voice informs the reader about shared events by recalling "a lovely afternoon with Kurt at the fair" when "Christa was visiting one of her girlfriends" (104).[101] What the child liked best, however, was that Kurt did not insist that she ride any of the fair

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[97] Although literary scholars Gerhard and Mona Knapp discuss the figure of Christa exclusively in relation to the mother figures found in Wohmann's earlier novels and in the context of antiauthoritarian childrearing, I thus agree with their assessment that "a lack of emotional warmth and care, of love, and spontaneous affection must cause the most refined, seemingly 'most progressive' upbringing of children to fail" (95). The original quotation reads: "ein Mangel an Nestwärme, an Liebe und spontaner Zuneigung muß die raffinierteste, scheinbar 'fortschrittlichste' Erziehung fehlschlagen lassen" (95).

[98] The original German reads "Heimweh" and "dicken Reisebrei mit Zucker und Zimt" (56).

[99] The original German reads "Spaß macht es [die Arbeit] ihr" (33) and "ehrgeizig und fast von der Arbeit besessen" (63).

[100] The German wording is "er hat sich geopfert" (105).

[101] The original German reads "ein herrlicher Nachmittag mit Kurt auf dem Jahrmarkt . . . Christa war zu Besuch bei einer Freundin" (104).

attractions because "she only wanted to take a look at everything" (105), while holding his hand,[102] in a gesture of seeking physical contact with her new parent. The third-person narrator repeatedly informs the reader: "She [the child] generally likes Kurt better than Christa" (80), especially because every time Christa was not at home, "they ate more and better (179).[103]

Using the rhetoric of conservative tropes that strengthen the position of fathers within the family, Wohmann thus has presents the father-figure Kurt as more central to Paula's well-being than her adoptive mother. He is the one who maintains an emotional relationship with the child. Unfortunately, the reader also learns that Kurt can only provide the girl with the love and care she longs for when his wife is absent. Reflecting the principles of antiauthoritarian child rearing, which demand mother and father be equal partners and support the one another in all childrearing decisions, Wohmann presents Kurt as consequently unable to assume a more dominant, independent role in his parenting. Hence, his positive influence on Paula's upbringing remains marginalized, suggesting the negative consequences for the children when fathers fail to assert themselves. By depicting Kurt's parental emasculation, the author can be read as supporting contemporaneous public debates about the need to restore traditional gender roles after 1968.[104]

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[102] The German original reads "sie hat einfach nur alles betrachten wollen" (105).
[103] The German original reads "Es hat Kurt überhaupt lieber als Christa" (80) and " sie aßen doch mehr und besser" (179).
[104] A famous literary example of articulating these discourses is for instance also Ester Vilar's *Der dressierte Mann* (1971), presenting men as victims of female manipulation.

The same possible attribution applies to the novel's negative presentation of motherhood combined with employment. Wohmann mirrors in her depiction of Christa the prototype of her era's newly emancipated woman, as someone working for personal satisfaction, but attributes to her a great many characteristics commonly associated with a *Rabenmutter*: coldhearted, unloving, and selfish. As the analyses of narratives before 1945 in the foregoing chapters have documented, these attributes exist in a long tradition that describes women considered to be *bad* mothers. As Knapp and Knapp demonstrate in their study, Wohmann's use of narrative perspective guides the readers' sympathies in a way that precludes positive identification with Christa (90), as a working woman. With this character, then, Wohmann offers her female readership the exact opposite of a compelling role model to emulate and, by implication, can be read as critiquing the feminists of her time who argued for the successful combination of professional aspirations and motherhood.

In sum, although *Paulinchen war allein zu Haus* was intended as a satirical critique of antiauthoritarian childrearing,[105] as well as of contemporaneous adoption policies, I suggest that the novel proposes much more. Perhaps inadvertently, it illustrates viewpoints propagated by postwar politicians and the male-dominated media[106] especially those of her secret editor Marcel Reich-Raniki, who was known for his belief

[105] See her commentary "Paulinchen war allein zu Haus-aus eigener Sicht" (59-62).
[106] As Wiggershaus points out, the media as "opinion shaping industry" was completely in the hands of men (120), and the womanly ideal communicated through the media had little to do with the situation of real women, even less with independent, critical women" (124).

in traditional gender role allocations.[107] The castigating representation of a working mother thus calls into question the possibility of viable alternatives to established gender roles as proposed by the women's movement at the time. In doing so, the narrative can be read as reinforcing the notion that a life devoted exclusively to one's children is the only viable option for successful mothering. As documented in media coverage about Wohmann's book-reading tours, her audience strongly supported this aspect of her novel, and thus the role society had assigned to them—that they either could not or did not want to escape from.[108]

On the other hand, a basis exists for Wohmann's claims that she was indeed interested in exploring the possible parameters of home and family: Paula is not totally ruined by this parenting—she does not die as did her historical namesake. The radical feminist option of antiauthoritarian parenting is nonsense in this novel, but the more conventional pudgy mother who cooks traditional German food is not the refuge for Paula either, as it would have been in the pulp women's novels. Wohmann's Christa is straightforwardly marked as a bad mother because of *both* her ideologies and her behavior. She browbeats her husband and she refuses to entertain modifications or a middle ground.

The novel's mothering counterpart is less wearing on the child, but not a positive role model for a girl who wants a future other than cooking and childcare. What she needs to find is a brighter future grounded in higher education—in a boarding school that

[107] Reich-Ranicki even publicly stated that women due to their "biological and family based impediments" could only as an exception from the rule take on employments outside the private sphere. See Wiggershaus 125.
[108] See Elle "Paulinchen und andere."

gives clear messages about right and wrong, without any double messages, and which fosters independence and later upward mobility both socially and economically. As the author once stated in an interview, "The wasteland I describe in my books is, after all, an impulse to change things" (Morris-Farber, "Sociological Implications" 306).[109] Her novel, then, might be readable as representing a no-win situation for individual females—unless they *leave* home and find a positive future someplace else with options that are otherwise not accessible to them.

Given this reading of *Paulinchen*'s message, a case can be made that the work is an example of serious, not trivial, literature. Indeed, I suggest that this narrative is one of the last of its kind, namely a work that to some extent problematizes current social phenomena (here: antiauthoritarian childrearing, adoptions, and the absence of positive role models for young women), but at the same time still entertains an educated female readership that is not interested in feminist narratives and challenges these readers to reconsider the narratives that guide their lives—the discursive representations that society has imposed.

FEMALE IDENTITIES IN POSTWAR GERMAN LITERATURE: SOME CONCLUSIONS

In sum, Wohmann's novel discussed above, like Böll's novel addressed in the previous chapter, shows continuities among several strands of dominant postwar

[109] "Die Öde, die ich in meinen Büchern beschreibe, ist doch ein Anstoß dazu, etwas zu verändern" (Morris-Farber, "Sociological Implications" 306).

discourses. These two literary representations of West German women as mothers—in contrast to those found in the Third Reich—depict a group of female protagonists who are unable to effectively raise their children without the help of men, husbands to be precise. They thus underscore the negative consequences of raising children outside patriarchal family structures and emphasize the purported need to restore traditional gender roles, or at least a new balance.

Moreover, these two novels can be read as responses to the growing numbers of women seeking employment for personal satisfaction in the postwar period, who, as working mothers, were confronted with the potential of introducing serious shortcomings for their children. In both novels, successfully combining motherhood with employment is represented as impossible, because these women are branded as *Rabenmütter*, as unable to balance home and work and unwilling to put the needs of their children before their own. In this context, both novels exemplify a shift from women's toward men's willingness to make sacrifices for children deprived of a mothering parent, further emphasizing the father as the cornerstone of well-being for his offspring. The greater variety of options available to adult females during the Nazi period thus paradoxically seems to have led to more oppression of women with children after 1945. Regardless of their class backgrounds, the more competent mothers are presented as stay-at-home mothers.

Consequently, these examples of postwar narratives ultimately fail to challenge the dominant discourses of the society from which they emerge and provide no new images of motherhood for Germany's shared social imaginary. Small wonder, then, that

readers after 1945 looking for narratives empowering women with children actually had to turn to the novels dating back to the Third Reich, a phenomenon that explains the lasting popularity of writers like Ina Seidel long into the postwar period. Yet these older novels by Seidel, and other authors of her time, share other important commonalities with the works discussed in this and the previous chapter. In virtually all of them, working women are considered socially acceptable *only* when their employment is necessary for the welfare of their children. Moreover, the novels identify good mothers for their readers by endowing them with the qualities of good housewives not as interesting female people. The message of these novels thus imprints consistent conceptual possibilities for what is thinkable and acceptable for German women to do, and thereby, forestalls the development of acceptable alternatives for women's lives in the German social imaginary.

Yet what is remarkable about these two examples of postwar literature, which addressed a similar readership,[110] is that Böll's earlier novel actually aimed to criticize West German postwar politics directly, laws he viewed as restricting the acceptable identity of adult females to that of the married stay-at-home mother, while Wohmann explores other options to a degree. As my reading of *Haus ohne Hüter* suggests, Böll tried to offer a seemingly more progressive perspective than Wohmann's text, a novel written twenty years later in the middle of the feminist movement's efforts to achieve

[110] That Böll and Wohmann indeed addressed a similar readership has been documented in studies such as the one by Ludwig Fischer, who analyzed different segments of literature in terms of its readers. While according to him, authors like Konsalik and Simmel, for instance, attracted an audience more from the lower end of the middle class, more artistic writers like Böll and Wohmann appealed particularly to the more educated upper middle class (326). In addition, both were members of Group 47, which also has been confirmed to attract a similar audience.

gender equality. However, simultaneously, one has to bear in mind that Wohmann's character Paula neither ends up with a pudgy replacement mom—nor dead like her namesake in *Der Struwwelpeter*. A careful reading of Wohmann's novel thus indeed suggests that there might not be a one-fits-it-all answer to the problem of women's quest for independence and self-actualization. It might not be necessary or desirable for all women to become stay-at-home mothers, reflecting Wohmann's own choice to have a career rather than children. In this sense then, the writer does appear as a feminist, yet one who made an effort to address issues of her era and, at the same time, reach a broad audience.

The consequence for scholarship is a necessary questioning of the prevalent notion documented at the outset of this chapter that all "serious" women's literature of the 1970s supports the feminist cause and calls for further research on women writers who, like Wohmann, distanced themselves from the movement and hence were largely excluded from subsequent scholarly discussions. Scholarship rethinking the category of *Trivialliteratur* in terms of cultural representations and their era's public imaginary might well illuminate the social capital of an extant, but largely ignored and forgotten canon of widely read works that significantly influenced a large portion of West German female readers and the nation's social imaginary. Such a reexamination could explore in greater depth what role the new feminist literary establishment may have played in the possible disappearance of narratives about a variety of positive lifestyles for married women with children. My analysis of Wohmann's novel looks at one aspect of this issue, but proposes that radical feminist writers may have contributed to a scarcity of multivalent roles for

women within West German literature. Missing from our optic today is a possible middle tier of literature that challenges the social status quo without seeking to obliterate it.

Moreover, as I further clarify in the final chapter of this project, literary scholarship should realize that such a missing middle tier in women's literature may have contributed to female readers turning to trivial novels in search of narratives that interrogated the conditions of their own lives. As the next chapter suggests, the dominant representations of mothers in fictional narratives written after 1989, the subsequent major rupture in the history of Germany, are still affected by that optic. Such a phenomenon may well be due in part to publishers intervening in order to pursue a presumed traditional audience. In the search for a reunited identity, the reunited state struggled, and so did its female population. As I will illustrate, the problems women confront in efforts to escape traditional gender roles persist after the fall of the wall, especially in regard to combining motherhood with employment. Sociologist Elisabeth Pfeil noted already in 1969 that "the family-centered roles of housewife and mother could not be combined with employment by anybody but a superwomen" (Kolinsky 77). Yet as Hera Lind's bestseller *Das Superweib* (1994) will illustrate, it not only takes a superwoman, but also a lot of luck, to actualize this dual role in reunited Germany.

Chapter 6: The Mother in German Literature after 1989—No Superweib in Sight

With the fall of the wall and Germany's subsequent reunification, once more women's social roles were the topic of heated public discussions. East and West German women had lived under very different conditions before 1989, so the question of which "model" would serve the future of the reunited German state best, was much debated. However, the changes in laws, public policies, and the perception of the women's place in the unified nation played out much less favorably for ex-GDR women than their peers in the former FRG. That said, one dissatisfaction all German women seemingly shared, was with the overt feminism of the 1970s, a phenomenon which soon found its way into a new form of popular women's literature—a revisionary discourse about women that actually reinforced older stereotypes in its antifeminism.

In this context I will address the case of Hera Lind (b. 1957), one of the pioneers and most successful authors of this new antifeminist literary genre developing after the fall of the wall, who, like Gabriele Wohmann, explicitly distanced herself from feminists in her writing. My final case study focuses on Lind's bestselling novel *Das Superweib* (The Superwoman, 1994), which features a housewife and mother, who accidently gets divorced and as a result—since the lawyer secretly publishes her divorce dairy—becomes

a celebrated writer. This novel's successful combination of motherhood and a career in reunited Germany can, as an analysis of *Das Superweib* will illustrate, occur only by chance. Like Wohmann's text, Lind's humorous narrative explores and comments on her era's ongoing struggle with established gender roles, while simultaneously mocking stereotypical feminists. In striking contrast to Wohmann, however, and in the tradition of entertaining escapist novels, Lind provides her audience with a happy ending—although one that her female readers cannot truly emulate in reality.

Instead of criticizing patriarchal relations in society by offering its readers bleak and disturbing narratives, as the feminist literature of the seventies and early eighties did, the new popular women's novel emerging starting in the late 1980s offered its readership positive female images to identify with and be empowered by. Consequently, the well-educated *Powerfrau* with a career (and sometimes a Porsche) turns into a new stock character in this literature. However, this character's agency and ability to control her life seemingly vanishes as soon as she marries (or finds a life partner) and has children. The underlying rhetoric of this genre's narratives thus remains parallel to that documented in previous eras: novels confine feminism to the unmarried women without children. Financially and emotionally independent women with children are a rarity. More importantly, even on the eve of the twenty-first century (and even since then, as I will argue in this chapter), the literary representation of the *ideal* German woman who can exist in the Germany of the 1990s and beyond is, despite the unprecedented range of roles available to her in contemporary German society, almost invariably that of the mother.

Unlike earlier feminist fiction that had been styled as "serious," Lind's novel

refrains from openly challenging the *status quo* of women's position in society. Nevertheless, her narrative can be read for multiple messages about the options for women within contemporary Germany. On the one hand, the novel still presents its readership with the message that "a woman's place" is still at home, nurturing her children—everything else remains a fairy tale. But on the other hand, even while presenting emancipation as a fairy tale, the story highlights the continuing difficulties that German women had in trying to escape traditional gender roles—even post-*Wende*. In fact, I maintain that these problems of representation in the public mind continue well into the New Millennium, as a brief discussion of two contemporary novels, Monika Peetz's *Die Dienstagsfrauen* (2010) and Inger-Maria Mahlke's *Rechnung Offen* (2013), will illuminate. Both narratives, although in very different ways, speak to the available social roles for German women in current works of fiction. However, what the images of these novels share with their historical antecedents is that they too suggest that motherhood, independence, and happiness are virtually irreconcilable in today's German society. Becoming a woman who can combine these options remains an illusion, the option available only to a mythical *Superweib,* in the social imaginary of German popular literature.

To substantiate my claims, the subsequent sections of this chapter will first provide a brief historical excursus on the nation's most recent legal and social transformations after the fall of the Wall as context for the production of Lind's book. Next, I will illustrate how, at the same time public discourses on what model of motherhood would best serve the German state, a new popular literature by and about

women emerged. An analysis of the interplay between post-*Wende* literary representations of women, particularly as mothers, and public debates on "the woman question" then follows, drawing on specific close readings and the reception of Lind's novel *Das Superweib*. In doing so, I will demonstrate how the narrative's representation of women simultaneously showcases and criticizes what women *can* and *cannot* do in reunited Germany, but in an entertaining manner that explains the book's success with a broad readership. At the same time, as my analysis of Lind's book suggests, the author chose the genre of a modern fairy tale for her novel's at times revolutionary messages wisely, since such a camouflage ensured her book could reach a large audience. Finally, I assess adult women's images in contemporary German novels, all of which reflect the absence of models for integrated, fulfilling social roles combined with motherhood.

A "WOMEN'S PLACE" IN REUNITED GERMANY

The reunification of 1990 revealed significant disparities in attitudes and government policies regarding motherhood and employment. The shifts in discourse and policies prompted a true disruption in the imaginary of many German women. The West German policy framework was oriented around homes hosting a male breadwinner and a wife-mother, with strongly institutionalized patterns of support (e.g. tax system, subsidies) for women as full-time homemakers when they had children (Marx Ferree 159). In contrast, the socioeconomic structure of former East Germany depended on its female workforce. In the GDR, the vast majority of adult women were mothers as well as

workers, but wifehood was not portrayed as critical to being a mother (Marx Ferree 161).

In fact, in the GDR, about 1/3 of children were born out of wedlock, as a mother could very well support herself and her children without a husband (Braun 108). The East German state provided women with children with a great many social benefits and privileges: a one year paid maternity leave equivalent to the lost earnings for the first child, and one-and-a-half year's leave for each subsequent child, adequate paid leave to attend to sick children, cheap and available childcare provisions, one paid household day per month, reduced working hours and other privileges for single parents of young children, less expensive housing for large families, job training and other training facilities during working hours (Behrend 238). In addition, GDR schools had been all-day schools providing, as a rule, before and after-school programs for children under ten and, in the rural areas, adequate boarding facilities for children too far away to travel to and from school (Behrend 241).

These measures, none of which existed in West Germany at the time (Behrend 238), were all intended to make the combination of motherhood and employment attractive to women and consequently "opened the doors for women's emancipation and financial independence which did not exist in the West" (Braun 107), while at the same time leading to higher birthrates in the GDR than the FRG (Braun 118). The idea that a stay-at-home mother has a warmer relationship with her child and was the only person able to adequately care for her children found thus much less support in the east than in the west (Marx Ferree 162), where this notion appears to be still widespread and very resilient, despite any social progress since WWII . Hence, "in 1990 ex-GDR women were

closer to other European and American norms than their West German peers" (Marx Ferree 162), and compared to the latter, enjoyed a higher social status (Braun 106).

Reunification, not surprisingly, brought into conflict these two models for female and family life. East German women "never wished to forego the social benefits they had enjoyed under the former system" that allowed them to work while raising children, because work, trade, and professional skills ranked as high as the family in these women's catalogue of values (Behrend 238). A 1991 survey conducted by the *Allensbach Institut für Demoskopie* underscores these findings: 73% of East German women agreed that employment was a source of contentment in life for them, and 86% of women in the east regarded the family as a condition of happiness (Braun 118). Moreover, the conjunction of motherhood with employment was seen as an important factor for a happy life by these women: only 3% of them wanted to be housewives only (Behrend 247). In contrast, only 45% of women in the West believed employment would contribute to their satisfaction with life. Yet 70 % of West German women considered the family as an essential factor for contentment (Braun 117). This significant difference in attitude toward the role of work for a woman's happiness in life is striking and cannot be easily understood without reference to an imaginary anchored in social programs and habits.

For GDR women of working age, as other studies reveal, irrespective of whether they had children or not and irrespective of their social background and particular age group, gainful employment meant more than an independent income (Behrend 246). GDR women stated that, next to the material advantages of gainful employment granting them economic independence and a higher standard of living, there were also social

motives, for instance social contacts, the sense of being needed, acknowledgement of one's own worth, professional reasons—that is, making full use of one's skills—and psychological reasons, for example, gaining self-confidence and overcoming isolation (Behrend 246). Significantly, West German women *named these same factors as reasons to seek employment* and stated that, if more day care were available, "many more women would decide to work full time" (Braun 115).

However, sufficient childcare was—and still is—not the only factor influencing the decision of whether or not to return to the workplace for women. In a recent study investigating the reasons for German women becoming stay-at-home mothers, social peer pressure is named as significant component. The majority of women in the west, 69% to be precise, continue to see themselves confronted with the stereotypes of the *Rabenmutter* by "female and male colleagues" as well as by people in their "immediate social environment (family, neighbors, friends, male and female educators in childcare facilities, other children's parents, etc." (Wippermann 15).[1] Through "subtle signals as well as antagonizing questions" people communicate their disapproval of women who work once they become mothers (Wippermann 15).[2] Hence, the "majority of mothers (and their partners) feel the pressure to legitimatize" their decision to return to work, "which shows how rooted and effective traditional gender roles and the normative image

[1] "der Kolleginnen und Kollegen, als auch im nahen sozialen Umfeld (Familie, Nachbarschaft, auch Freundeskreis, Erzieherinnen und Erzieher in Kitas, Eltern anderer Kinder u. a.)" (Wippermann 15).
[2] "subtile Signale, aber auch durch konfrontative Fragen" (Wippermann 15).

of the 'good mother' in the west of the FRG continues to be" (Wippermann 15).[3] In contrast, only 25% of East German women feel this form of social peer pressure.

Tellingly, while 85% of adult females in the FRG in 1989 were mothers, a comparable number to the 89% of GDR women with children, only 40% of married women with children under six years of age were employed at all (Marx Ferree 160). Furthermore, if these women did reenter the labor market, they were most frequently hired for part-time jobs or positions "well below their formal training and educational level" (Marx Ferree 161). From this perspective, a close look at the surveys mentioned above suggests that what truly differentiateed East and West German women then, was not a difference in attitude toward work in terms of being more or less important for a happy life, but rather the difference of satisfaction gained by women with children at the workplace in terms of peer pressure, which influenced many West German women in their decision to become stay-at-home mothers. Viewed from this perspective, it seems that family-friendly employment regulations as well as an attitude change regarding working mothers in the west would not only be the basis for women's financial independence and gender equality, but also that such conditions would be essential to recalibrate women's personal satisfaction.

However, after reunification in October 1990, "the established West German political parties took over the reins of power with a handful of particularly adaptable East

[3] "Die Mehrheit der Mütter (und ihre Partner) spüren den Legitimationsdruck" and "Das zeigt, wie verwurzelt und wirksam das traditionelle Geschlechterrollenbild und Normbild der 'guten Mutter' im Westen der Bundesrepublik weiterhin ist" (Wippermann 15).

Germans allowed to deputize for them" (Behrend 239).[4] Consequently, the east was pressured to adapt the west's socioeconomic framework, including its lack of social benefits for working mothers.[5] Moreover, almost immediately after the *Wende*, the takeover of GDR industry and agriculture by West German firms began, bringing in its wake large-scale deindustrialization and disbanding communal agricultural concerns in the interests of privatization, both leading to massive unemployment (Behrend 239). Women suffered most from these developments, as they were frequently targeted as the first to be dismissed. Concomitantly, the percentage of female GDR workers who "were much better represented in male-dominant occupations than women in the West," began "rapidly moving downward toward the FRG's idea of *normal*" once western companies took over eastern businesses (Marx Ferree 157). Once unemployed, East German women who were mothers found themselves additionally discriminated against by the labor offices or being considered too old to be given a job at fifty or older (Behrend 239).

These tactics share great similarity to the socioeconomic measures implemented after WWII, when West German women were forced out of their jobs in order to make room for the returning men. The traditional ideas about motherhood that were strongly supported by the state after reunification can be seen in this light as well—that is, as a measure to manage the high number of unemployed workers in the east by designating women as the unemployed cadre. Many of the 1.8 million who women lost their jobs in East Germany between autumn 1989 and February 1994 were thus never reintegrated into

[4] This statement by Behrend might be a bit too simplistic, however, as the representatives from the ex-GDR were under attack from all sides and they had little choice to withstand the enormous pressure put on them. Yet in terms of public perception, particularly in the former East, Behrend's comment is correct.
[5] For details on the Unification Treaty regarding all aspects concerning women, see Young 163-66.

the labor market (Behrend 240). Hence, with reunification, the social and economic situation of East German women deteriorated with spectacular speed.

That decline holds true even for those women who did not lose their jobs, as they were confronted with the harsh realities of gainful employment under western market conditions with employers indifferent to women's domestic responsibilities with regard to managing daily childcare and related obligations (Behrend 239). As a result of the new, unsupportive framework in conjunction with increasing unemployment rates, the east experienced a massive decline in its birthrates after 1990, which West German media politicized, calling it a "birth strike" and "a deliberate act of defiance" (Marx Ferree 161).

But the negative effects East German women suffered from as result of reunification were not limited to the area of employment and social benefits. Indeed, what caused the most emotional and heated discussions among eastern females was the loss of free contraception and free abortion on demand during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy (Behrend 238). In other words, it was not the monetary aspect that upset the women as much as the loss of power over such personal decisions as whether or not to terminate an unwelcome pregnancy. Article 31 of the Unification Treaty called for a common law on this contentious issue, but there was no consensus reached, despite the fact that the East German women's movement put enormous efforts into fighting for all German women's right to have safe abortions on demand (Behrend 239). Consequently, it took five years for the new, common abortion law to be passed by the Bundestag in 1994. However, the result was disappointing. In the West German tradition the law "continued to define abortion as criminal act, but promised never to punish it, if the

woman went through 'pro-life oriented but open outcome' counseling" (Marx Ferree 154).

Ironically, while the East German women's movement played a central role in the uprising and peaceful revolution leading to the fall of the wall, they had virtually no influence on the political agenda thereafter (Young 2-7). The movement's efforts, as it tried to stand up for all German women's rights, had failed due to the FRG's "gendered political opportunity structures and its exclusionary mechanisms" (Young 29).[6] Consequently, while women in the east gained the political and civil liberties associated with democracy after reunification, they simultaneously lost a great many privileges and experienced considerable disillusionment with politics. Given this history, post-*Wende* women's groups in the east shifted the focus of their work away from politics, which to many of them appeared after the fact as nothing but futile and time-consuming bickering. As a result, they concentrated increasingly on different sociocultural projects rather than direct political interventions (Behrend 239).

For West German women, on the other hand, little had changed with the fall of the wall, and therefore they did not see the need to protest their socioeconomic status as had their sisters in the east. This reaction may well reflect the fact that many FRG women's situations had improved in the decades after the postwar era. Compared to earlier periods, particularly young women now enjoyed the fruits of previous policy changes and the efforts of second-wave feminism: more female students enjoyed higher

[6] As Young explains these mechanisms in great detail, see 115-98, and demonstrates how East German women were thus prevented from influencing the political agenda of unification.

education, entered the universities as well as the job market, and enjoyed greater personal freedom (Kolinsky270-74). Among these women, the notion that gender equality was achieved was common, although a closer inspection of policy and reality (especially in light of GDR females' experience) suggests a more complicated finding (Kolinsky 277).

Examining this issue, sociologist Ute Gerhard suggests that German reunification turned out to be the crossroads for the German feminist movement and can either be regarded as the end of German feminism or as a totally new beginning (120). Due to the reemergence of public debates on a new set of social issues, as well as problems and tensions that arose between East and West German feminists, the feminist movement in the narrow sense began to weaken (121) and the movement never fully recovered. After unification, the majority of women in the united Germany believed that there was no need for a movement on a national scale anymore (123-24). Instead, after originating internationally from world women's conferences, third-wave feminist's debates entered Germany, framed in a worldwide rather than a German context. As a result German feminists focus on global initiatives and women rights as international rather than local civil rights (123-24).[7]

Perhaps this lack of feminist engagement in turn explains the concomitant lack of German family policies designed over the last twenty-five years aimed at enforcing gender equality outside the home. The latest example in this regard is the 2014 introduction of the so-called *Mütterrente*, a mother's pension, adding more points for

[7] For a detailed overview of the new set of social issues discussed since the mid-nineties by German third-wave Feminists, see Marx Ferree 181-200.

each child born to the points that determine retirement benefits for German women. Concretely, this translates to about 28€ per month per child in the west, and about 25€ per month per child in the east ("Mütterrente"), to be paid out to retirees. This token measure echoes characteristics of the generous "reward system" introduced during the Third Reich, compensating mothers for each child born in the service of the state. Styled as innovative, the *Elterngeld*, another form of compensation for earnings lost related to raising children, that has been paid since 2007, was praised by the government as "a key instrument with new character in terms of family policy" ("Wichtige Stationen").[8] Nevertheless, this social benefit, too, turns out to be rather familiar, as it is basically a different form of the long existing *Kindergeld*, a fixed monthly payment from the state to all parents. Unlike the *Kindergeld*, however, the amount of *Elterngeld* depends on the previous monthly income of the parent staying at home—rewarding middle-class women who had been educated into good positions, and then quit their jobs to devote their energies to full-time motherhood. While the government sought to emphasize gender equality by naming the payment *Elterngeld*, making it available to the person (either mother or father) who leaves the workforce in order to raise the child, the reality is that it is primarily mothers who receive the benefit and stay at home (Wippermann 30).

That this decision generally falls to the mother has been further facilitated by the continuous absence of adequate (full-day) and available child facilities. As of 2015, places in such facilities were only available for 27% of West German children under

[8] The original texts reads "ein familienpolitisches Schlüsselinstrument mit neuem Charakter," see "Wichtige Stationen."

three years of age and for 52% of their peers in the east (Wippermann 13). The situation for the three- to six-year-olds is similar: 34.1% in the west and 72.6% in the east have access to a spot (Wippermann 13).[9] Clearly, the family policies and measurements described above are thus not designed to make a combination of motherhood and full-time employment possible—or even desirable, since the benefits paid to women often come close to their previous income, at least for women with a low to a medium income. One can thus hardly speak of "a cultural reflex," supposedly leading to a "retraditionalizing" of gender roles once a couple has children (Wippermann 11)[10]—that is, the woman openly choosing to give up her job in favor of becoming a stay-at-home mother—but rather this "natural choice of mothers" can be more accurately described as the result of failed family policy preventing gender equality.[11] as Myra Marx Ferree suggests (228), only time will tell whether or not a putative further integration into and adaptation of German policies to a common European framework will enable change in this regard. At this point, however, family politics still tacitly restricts a German "woman's place" very much to her home, where she is supposed to bear children for the state and subsequently care for them.

The next section of this chapter traces examples of the historical discourses on motherhood noted above in selected German novels after 1989. In particular, I will

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[9] In France or the US, on the other hand, sufficient child care is available from an early age on.

[10] Wippermann writes "In der Regel führt die Geburt des ersten Kindes bei Frauen und Männern zum kulturellen Reflex, dass der Mann verstärkt in der Verantwortung ist, das Familieneinkommen zu verdienen. Die mit Beginn der Familiengründung einsetzende Retraditionalisierung der Aufgabenteilung zwischen Frauen und Männern hat den Effekt der Steigerung der Vollzeiterwerbstätigkeit von Männern und dem Rückgang der Vollzeiterwerbstätigkeit von Frauen" (11).

[11] For an in-depth discussion on how current German family policies as part of the nation's welfare state cause gender inequality see Mary Daly, especially pages 78-82 as well as 213-14.

discuss the emergence of a "new" popular women's literature post-*Wende* that underscores the increasing absence of feminist ideas in terms of women's role in society. Although these narratives aim to present modern, positive female images, they nevertheless further reinforce a limited cultural imaginary regarding what women *can* and *cannot* do, as I will demonstrate.

6.2 New Popular Women's Fiction after 1989: The Rise of the *Superweib*[12]

After the fall of the Wall, reunited Germany witnessed an unprecedented multitude of simultaneously emerging literary currents and developments as two traditions coalesced (Schnell 529). As a result, the literary market also became more and more fragmented (Taberner 9). What made the literary boom possible, as literary scholar William Collins Donahue claims, is the fact that cold war politics receded and freed German literature in east and west from its previous frequently political agenda (181). Reflecting this change, not only does the "apolitical becomes the new 'normal'" in literature (181), but also "an apolitical playfulness had arrived in the [literary] scene," that enabled authors to experiment with new styles, genres, and themes (187).

In his overview of post-1989 German literature, Ralf Schnell thus identifies and discusses six new major trends of the nineties and beyond (529). First, the so-called *Wende*-literature focusing on reunification, a preferred genre for established "serious" authors as much for newcomers like Thomas Brussig, whose *Helden wie wir* (*Heroes*

[12] According to literary scholar Katarina Düringer, the word *Superweib* (superwoman) referring to the title and main character of Hera Lind's novel *Das Superweib*, actually became "the generic term for the typical heroines of women's new popular novels" ("Oberbegriff für die typischen Heldinnen der neuen Frauen-Unterhaltungsromane of the nineties and beyond"), see Düringer 26.

Like Us, 1995) takes a rather humorous approach to the subject and became an instant bestseller (531). Second, transcultural or migrant literature (564) emerged to focus on the experiences of minorities, and was often, but not exclusively, written by first- or second-generation immigrants. This genre, a rough equivalent to *Wende*-literatur, displays a broad range of approaches, from serious to humorous. Popular with a mass readership and critics alike in this vein are, for instance, the works of Wladimir Kaminer (567). Third, the early nineties gave rise to *Shoah* literature in Germany (571), with US-based Holocaust survivor (and Germanist) Ruth Klüger's novel *weiter leben. Eine Jugend* (*Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*, 1992) turning into a surprise success with readers,[13] selling more than 100,000 copies the first year alone (575). Fourth, one finds literary fiction remembering the (Nazi) past (585), including novels like Bernhard Schlink's international bestseller *Der Vorleser* (*The Reader*, 1995), which have continued to increase in number (593). In this context, it is significant that the focus of many of these narratives remembering the past shifts from representing Germans as perpetrators to Germans as victims, especially associated with the war or displacement. [14] Fifth, *Netzliteratur*, that is, cyber literature, emerged with the boom of the Internet (598). However, this experiential form of literature relies on cyber media, particularly in order to achieve interactivity with its readers, and so it still remains relatively marginal in terms of producing novelistic texts and could not be distributed successfully in book form (599).

[13] The book turned into a success after Marcel Reich-Ranicki praised it in his TV show *Das Literarische Quartett*.
[14] For a good overview of such novels see Vedder 59-79.

The sixth and last development during this time that Schnell mentions is the rise of a new form of *Popliteratur* (578), texts that center on pop culture and contemporary lifestyles. Examples of more critical works belonging to this genre range from Christian Kracht and Thomas Meineke to Judith Hermann and Julia Frank, all authors attracting a primarily well-educated and intellectual readership (584), and none of whom became "a major success" (Taberner 6). However, the nature of the genre, underscoring the aspect of literature as consumer products (Schnell 580), and its goal of being designed to "read light and pleasant, as amusement, as entertainment, and to be consumed" (Schnell 584),[15] lent itself also to more lighthearted literary representations, such as the "new" German women's literature, a subgenre of *Popliteratur*. This is the literature that offers a post-reunification female audience a set of images that naturalizes the position of women in a time of economic downturn.

After the bleak and often disturbing narratives found in "serious," that is critical feminist, West German women's literature of the early eighties, many female readers were seeking alternative representations and more positive images of contemporary women. Furthermore, due to the achievements of second-wave feminist movement, the younger generation of women could not relate to stories of oppression and restrictions that they had not experienced themselves—they had, for instance, been able to study (Sharp and Flinspach 194). Yet, instead of celebrating the greater freedoms feminism had brought particularly young women, in "the popular mind feminism has become adversely

[15] Schnell's original talks about texts that "lesen sich leicht und angenehm, zum Zeitvertreib, zur Unterhaltung und zum Konsum" (584).

associated with lesbianism, hatred of men, and a desire to achieve a position of unfair privilege," and thus feminists were oftentimes "caricatured as joyless, puritanical, and life-denying," and "characterized by imputed attitudes to make-up, fashion, and sex" (Sharp and Flinspach 194). Consequently, as already noted in Chapter 5, the majority of young West German women began to move away from doctrinaire feminism of the 1970s. While denying that they still needed to pursue equality, these women (notably, those without children), as ironic as it may seem, took their equality of opportunity more or less for granted and had internalized feminist ideas by end of the eighties. Simultaneously, however, "feminism is being blamed quite unfairly for the frustration of women's experience in both east and west," especially "by many working mothers" due to feminism's lack of support for employed women with children (Sharp and Flinspach 194). Echoing Gerhard's findings noted above, the overall notion that feminism was not needed anymore appeared prevalent at the time among a great number of German women in east and west post-*Wende*, albeit for very different reasons. Not surprisingly, this belief was then subsequently reflected in and supported by the "new" popular women's literature of the period that aimed to end "the lamenting feminist literature" (Düringer 25),[16] instead providing female readers of the postfeminist generation with seemingly fresh, positive role models they could identify with.

Katarina Düringer's study *Beim nächsten Buch wird alles anders: Die neue deutsche Frauen-Unterhaltungsliteratur* (2001), with its title actually being a pun on Eva Heller's novel *Beim nächsten Mann wird alles anders* (Everything will change with the

[16] "die feministische Jammerliteratur" (Düringer 25).

next man, 1987), the book that paved the way for the subsequently emerging new popular women's literature (Düringer 23). Düringer's study offers a thorough overview of this genre's emergence, a discussion of its most important authors,[17] as well as analyses of fifteen sample novels. Instead of reiterating in great length Düringer's results, I will at this point only briefly highlight her findings as they pertain to my project, particularly regarding women's available social roles as presented in the scholar's sample narratives.

In this genre, the majority of novels center on one female, single lead character that has enjoyed a university education and is financially independent, but who nevertheless has not managed to make a career comparable to her male peers (Düringer 196). The few successful career women in them, on the other hand, appear only at the margins of the main story lines and are portrayed negatively, as unlikable (Düringer 196). With the exception of Hera Lind's characters, these protagonists are all childless (Düringer 197). However, a commonality of all these novels, including Lind's, is the search of the main protagonist for a male partner (Düringer 195). Once this partner has been found, the books close with happy endings, but mostly without commenting on the couple's future. Only Lind's novels often explicitly mention that, while the couple is in love and has children, marriage will not be part of their future. Although marketed by publishers as revolutionary novels (Düringer 185), featuring "carefree and independent"

[17] Strikingly, seemingly all authors of this genre, at the least in its beginnings, were West German women writers. This can perhaps be explained by Eva Kaufmann's observation that East German women writers—with few exceptions like Christa Wolf and Monika Maron—found it very difficult to find publishers for their works after the fall of the wall as seemingly "nobody wanted books by GDR women writers" (Kaufmann 214). Along these lines, bookstores in the east stacked their shelves generally with "western books" (Kaufmann 214). At the same time, however, the female authors that did get published seemed also not interested in this new genre and instead wrote about different issues (Kaufmann 213-14). Anna Kuhn's research seconds this (Kuhn 233-42).

characters (Düringer 7)[18] supposedly mirroring "the modern, emancipated woman" who has achieved gender equality (Düringer 185),[19] as Düringer argues, these narratives do not testify to women's emancipation (189).

I agree with Düringer's assessment, since these novels' images of women present only minor upgrades compared to the representations analyzed previously in this study: namely, that women can obtain a higher education, work, and enjoy great personal freedom, all changes that are historically documented. However, it is no coincidence that most of these novels close before their main characters are married and have children—that chapter of their lives (when they would be presumably relegated to role of the stay-at-home mother that still appears to have been promoted as the womanly ideal) was largely obscured. Hera Lind, according to Düringer the most well-known writer of this genre (26), exemplarily illustrates this claim with her novel *Das Superweib*. Before turning to the novel, however, I would like to briefly provide some information on Lind's biography and how it connects to her novels.

Born in Bielefeld in 1957 as Herlind Wartenberg, the daughter of a physician and a music teacher was raised in an "authoritarian, catholic" household (Petsch 16) and studied theology, German language and literature, and music at the University of Cologne, with the hopes of becoming a music teacher like her mother. Due to her exceptional vocal talent, however, she simultaneously trained as an opera singer alongside her other studies. Lind then traveled all over the world on concert tours after

[18] "locker und unabhängig" (7).
[19] "die moderne und emanzipierte Frau" (185).

she was hired in 1982 as an alto for the choir of the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* in Cologne. However, when Lind became pregnant with her first child, she interrupted her career as a professional singer and wrote her first novel *Ein Mann für jede Tonart* (A man for each tonality, 1988), which was later turned into a successful film. Dissatisfied with "the form and content of monotonous confessional literature by women: books in which crybabies suffered and maundered about female anatomy" (Gatterburg 136),[20] Lind sought to offer readers an alternative to the available narratives at the time, which she considered mostly "full of droning and boring emancipation" (Gatterburg 136).[21] Thus, Lind felt secure in her production: she drove to the Frankfurt Book Fair and personally handed her manuscript to editor Ingeborg Mues of the Fischer publishing house (Gatterburg 136). The latter had founded a series called *Frau in der Gesellschaft* (Women in society), aimed at emancipated female readers, underscored by the Venus symbol on the book back, which at the time was still heavily associated with the feminist movement (Düringer 7). With the declining interest in feminist literature after 1989, however, editor Mues had started to add also more entertaining publications to the series that would generate more profit than earlier "serious" feminist books had (Mainka 83). Since Lind's novel promised to do just that, Fischer published *Ein Mann für jede Tonart* in its "feminist" series, which, despite its plot that showed a woman making her own choice of partners, otherwise proves to have few emancipatory messages.

[20] "über die in Form und Inhalt monotone Bekenntnisliteratur von Frauen: Bücher, in denen Heulsusen herumlitten und von weiblicher Autonomie faselten" (Gatterburg 136).
[21] "voller Emanzipationsgedröhne und ziemlich langweilig" (Gatterburg 136).

Not yet able to live off her income as a writer, Lind returned to work as a concert singer after her maternity leave was over. Remarkably and in a very progressive gesture for the time, the physician father of Lind's son, whom she did not marry due to her belief that marriage basically renders women "directly into slavery" (Gatterburg 140),[22] took over the role of the stay-at-home dad. Three years later, during another pregnancy leave, Lind wrote the sequel to her first book, *Frau zu sein bedarf es wenig* (It does not take much to be a woman, 1991), which was likewise a popular read published by Fischer. Finally, in 1994, Lind apparently struck a public nerve with her third novel *Das Superweib*, which occupied place one on German bestseller lists for almost an entire year. From this moment on, Hera Lind became a household name in Germany, and has been one of its most visible female authors since that publication, despite the fact that she has never won any literary prizes.

Set in the present time in which the novel was written, *Das Superweib* tells the story of Franziska "Herr-Großkötter from Cologne (34), housewife and mother of two charming sons" (13),[23] an actress who gave up her promising career after becoming pregnant and subsequently marrying the father of her child, the famous director Will Großkötter. While he continues filming around the world, Franziska becomes a stay-at-home mother and soon gives birth to a second child. Her everyday life is dull and solely devoted to raising her two sons. Then, the unexpected happens: the protagonist is supposed to buy a house and seeks help from attorney Enno, recommended to her by a

[22] "geradewegs in die Sklaverei" (Gatterburg 140).
[23] "Herr-Großkötter aus Köln (34), Hausfrau und Mutter von zwei reizenden Söhnen" (13).

new acquaintance, Alma, Enno's mother. However, Enno is actually a divorce lawyer (not real estate) and misinterprets the situation. In the events that follow, Franziska accidently files for divorce. Although the misunderstanding is eventually noticed, Franziska decides to go ahead with the divorce anyway. Prompted by Enno to write some "notes" about her marriage for the court, Franziska writes what turns out to be enough material for a book, which Enno sends to a befriended editor of a famous publishing house for women's literature.

The editor then turns out to be Franziska's former high school teacher Viktor, whom she had a crush on already as a teenager. Although Franziska in the meantime has begun an affair with the practical Enno, she also succumbs to the intellectual Victor's love, and now is torn between the two men. But traveling the county on a promotion tour for her bestselling book, "Happy without Marriage,"[24] while Franziska's new nanny Paula takes care of her children, the protagonist falls for yet another man: the children's book author Martin, "a boyish type" (88),[25] in whom she sees a potential father figure for her two sons. However, Martin is married, and after a torrid affair, Franziska realizes that she cannot live without Enno, whom she nevertheless tells, "Please don't marry me!" (272),[26] as she does not want to lose her newly-won independence in marriage again. At the premiere of the movie adaptation of Franziska's book, directed by her grudging ex-husband, who cannot believe that "his" Franziska does not need him anymore, the novel then closes with the protagonist answering a reporter's question about what she will do in

[24] "Ehelos Glücklich."
[25] "ein jungenhafter Typ" (88).
[26] "Bitte heirate mich NICHT!" (272).

the future. She tells him: “I will go home to my family, where I will write a new novel!” (399).[27]

What evidently differentiates *Das Superweib* from previous women’s literature is that the wife successfully escapes her unhappy marriage by means of becoming a financially and emotionally independent single working mother, even if she hadn’t initially noticed how unhappy it was. In this sense, the publisher’s claim that the narrative tells the story of an emancipated, modern woman is thus not wrong and perhaps even justifies the book as part of a “feminist” series. But at the same time, the novel stresses the importance of family, especially children, and the need for a man’s presence in a woman’s life. As a male character puts it, the female heroine Franziska “is no morose women’s libber” (240),[28] a notion the novel continuously underscores. Not surprisingly, these mixed messages became the main topic of the novel’s reviews in newspapers and magazines.[29]

For example, reviewer Iris Mainka from *Die Zeit* called Lind’s novel “feminism light” (83),[30] an approach to emancipation that “a generation of women who are more pragmatic than militant” has waited for (83),[31] explaining why *Das Superweib* became a bestseller within weeks. Furthermore, Mainka especially praises the novel’s humor,

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[27] “Ich gehe nach haue, zu meiner Familie. Dort werde ich einen neuen Roman schreiben!“ (399).
[28] “keine verbissene Emanze” (240).
[29] Lind’s novel was discussed in just about every German newspaper (local and national) as well as magazines. To underscore the book’s representation in its importance for national discourses on motherhood, however, I will focus here on representative reviews from widely-read national newspapers and magazines, such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, die *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Zeit*, and *Der Spiegel*.
[30] “Feminismus light” (83).
[31] “Eine eher pragmatisch als kämpferische Frauengeneration” (83).

which differentiates it from previous "serious" women's literature. Cathrin Kahlweit, reviewing the book for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, believes the book's success rests particularly on the ability of many female readers to identify with Lind's character:[32] "The *Zeitgeist* does not allow [a woman looking for emancipation] to be feminist and definitely not to be politically engaged. If you believe pollsters, today's woman is different. Like Hera Lind. Or the characters of her novels" (Kahlweit 3).[33] In concert with the declining support for feminist activism post-1989, these reviewers discuss Lind's work and its explicit antifeminist and apolitical representation of women as a new approach to creating awareness regarding the need for female emancipation and a reconsideration of the bourgeois family model. Still, *FAZ* critic Thomas Steinfeld doubts that Lind's readership has much in common with her protagonist. For him, the superwoman recalls Cinderella, and Lind's story resembles a "tale of emancipation" (23) rather than a possible model for women to reach gender equality.[34] This notion is supported also by Angela Gatterburg's review in *Der Spiegel*, whose article on Lind and her book is thus titled: "Cinderella Has Luck" (136).[35]

That Lind's image of a successful single working mother would indeed present nothing but a fairy tale is also the point of Isabel Hörmann's later epistolary novel *Quo Vadis, Superweib?: Eine Mutter packt aus* (*Quo Vadis,* superwoman? A mother's

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[32] Once *Das Superweib* was turned into a movie, reviewer Hellmuth Karasek came to a similar conclusion. He maintains that particularly "women of the middle class" ("Mittelstandsfrauen") could identify with Franziska (Karasek 226).

[33] "Dem Zeitgeist entsprechend darf diese [emanzipationssuchende Frau] aber nicht feministisch und auf keinen Fall politisch engagiert sein. Glaubt man den Trendforschern, ist die Frau von heute anders. So wie Hera Lind eben. Oder ihre Romanfiguren" (Kahlweit 3).

[34] "Emanzipationsmärchen" (23).

[35] "Aschenputtel im Glück" (136).

revelation, 1999), a direct response to *Das Superweib*. Hörmann underscores in her book that Lind's representation is nothing an ordinary woman in reunited Germany could possibly emulate.[36] Rather, Hörmann believes mothers should protest the socioeconomic framework that hinders them, so that they make use of their education and support their children by remaining in the workforce (131-33), otherwise the situation for German women would remain as it was. Along these lines, another critic, Thomas Steinfeld, thus maintains that Lind's writing exhibits a form of "domesticated feminism" (23)[37] which "only appears to be subversive. The old world remains how it has been" (23).[38] In these readings, *Das Superweib* would therefore offer its readership no images potentially initiating change for women and the family in German society.

In short, not all critics agreed how to read the fundamental messages in Lind's new novel. What accounts for this difference? On the one hand, the author herself takes the middle position when she states: "I do not have a message. I am a feminist only for myself" (Kahlweit 3).[39] As such, Lind—like her contemporaneous audience—has supposedly internalized feminist ideas: for example, she can recognize marriage as a repressive institution and demand that women remain independent. Hence, her narrative is indeed critical of the bourgeois family and traditional notions of "a woman's place." In an interview, Lind once said, society forcing a woman exclusively into "her role as a

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[36] Note, too, that the title alludes to the Christian apocryphal Acts of Peter, where that is the question Peter asks of the risen Jesus; Jesus replies "*Romam eo iterum crucifigi*" ["I am going to Rome to be crucified again"], which strengthens Peter in his own mission. The title was already used by Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz, for the novel *Quo Vadis: A Narrative of the Time of Nero* (1895).

[37] "domestizierter Feminismus" (23).

[38] ". . . ist aber nur scheinbar subversiv. Die alte Welt bleibt, was sie ist" (23).

[39] "Ich habe keine Botschaft. Ich bin eine Feministin nur für mich allein" (3).

mother" filled the author "with rage" (Linnartz 24).[40] She dutifully performs critiques of any limitations on women's choice. Simultaneously, the writer alludes to the public's tiredness of "militant feminists" and their literature, which spoke only for a limited audience. Lind therefore aims to follow a different path, one that critiques, but likewise entertains—it is not her job to rob her readers of their own freedom to choose by prescribing proper outcomes.

Furthermore, Lind explicitly wants to reach a broad audience (Kahlweit 3), a commonality she shares with Gabriele Wohmann. Yet Lind is aware of the fact—and does not mind—that, unlike Wohmann, she will never be invited by literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki to sit on his sofa—that is, to participate in his literary TV show centering on high literature (Gatterburg 140). Lind knows that her novels do not belong in this category. Instead, her story lines often remind one more of pulp fiction and dime novels—they beg to be turned into rom-com films. Therefore, *Das Superweib* went "unnoticed by the feuilletons, unobserved by literary criticisms" (Steinfeld 23).[41] But despite being ignored by the publishing and media industries, readers considered the book worth buying: the sales of Lind's book went through the roof. Half a million copies sold within only four months (Gatterburg 136), and since then, sales have reached a total of almost three million books.[42] Lind's novel was likely the most visible publication in 1994, supported by the author doing a reading tour with 52 stops in cities all across reunited Germany from September to December (Kaiser 14), attracting several hundreds

[40] "der Frau und ihrer Rolle als Mutter, da kriege ich einen solchen Stein im Magen, da packt mich so eine Wut" (Linnartz 24).
[41] "Unbemerkt von den Feuilletons, unbeobachtet von der literarischen Kritik" (Steinfeld 23).
[42] See "Über Hera Lind" on the Fischer publishing house website.

of listeners to each reading (Gatterburg 136). Based on the novel's popularity, the well-known producer Bernd Eichinger secured the film rights within weeks of the narrative's publication (Gatterburg 139), and the movie starring Veronica Ferres as Franziska became a blockbuster in 1996 (Karasek 226), with multiple reruns on German TV since then (Heim 27).

Given the novel's high visibility and influence on the emergence of a new popular women's literature, it is surprising that literary scholars have paid so little attention to the book. Aside from Düringer's study, which contains a chapter on Hera Lind, to my knowledge few other scholarly publications on popular women's literature of the nineties discuss Lind's novels.[43] None of them are devoted entirely to *Das Superweib*. However, the book's reception by popular audiences argues that it is an important novel in terms of investigating the era's public discourses on women as mothers, especially in any assessment of the impact of postwar feminism. Also, it is safe to say that Lind's representation of the new "emancipated" woman with children has heavily influenced the German public social imaginary in the nineties and beyond. Most importantly, however, as the subsequent analysis will reveal, Lind's narrative presents its readers with multiple messages endorsing a "new" kind of German mother.

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43 See for instance Christine Frisch's comperative study *Von Powerfrauen und Superweibern: Frauenpopulärliteratur der 90er Jahre in Deutschland und Schweden*; Melani Schröter's essay "Die unehrlich verlogene Sauberfrau: Hera Lind's Romane 1989-1999."as well as Wiltrud Oelinger's analysis *Emazipationsziele in Unterhaltungsliteratur? Bestsellerromane von Frauen für Frauen: Eine exemplarische Diskurs- und Schemaanalyse*. In addition to these works, Ulrike Boldt published her Master's Thesis on "'Superweiber' im neuen deutschen Frauenroman: Zur Kritik eines Stereotypes," however this 70 page publication considerably lacks scholarly quality and therefore cannot be counted as credible source.

TURNING TO THE TEXT: HERA LIND'S *DAS SUPERWEIB*

As we have seen thus far, Hera Lind's novel was written by a bourgeois author and read by a broad mainstream (female) readership as documented by the book's reviews, and like Böll's and Wohmann's narratives, it has been little studied. This lack of attention to Lind's narrative, however, suggests that a great many scholars apparently still are not interested in examining "popular," entertaining literature, despite its influence on a large portion of the reading public. While the public likely read *Das Superweib* for the primary purpose of entertainment, readers nevertheless will have noticed the narrative's focus on the institution of marriage as form of oppression as well as the book's social critique of the combination of work and motherhood.

In contrast, most researchers in the past seem to have considered the novel exclusively as a "tale of emancipation," a fairy tale too uncritical and unserious to positively influence women's liberation, thus disregarding the notion expressed by a number of book reviewers who did in fact argue for the novel's feminist message. Indicative of critical disregard is the fact that Franziska's marriage, for instance, has not to my knowledge been discussed at all. Existing examinations of the novel have focused on the author's language use (including her imitation of local dialects and using all-capitalization to visually accentuate significant keywords) (Schröter), the novel in comparison to Lind's other works (Düringer, Schröter), its contribution to the genre of "new" popular women's literature (Oelinger, Düringer, Schröter), the novel's

representation of feminists (2002), the main protagonist's unlikely career and the representation of working women in general (Düringer, Schröter), and the novel engaging with discourses on feminism, reflecting women's position in the social order of the state, the family, and the workplace (Oelinger).

This section will expand on the last two points, unexamined by previous scholars: the novel's representations of working women in its relation to motherhood and the public discourses at play during the time this novel was written. This examination will reveal state of gender equity and the range of available socially acceptable roles for women articulated to a mainstream readership in the early 1990s. Moreover, this novel's representation of marriage breaks from depicting mothers and motherhood in strictly black and white terms and invites the reader to interrogate the stereotypes of what makes a "bad" mother. At the same time, the author suggests, but does not specify how, lasting positive changes for women in society only become possible, if they leave the traditional bourgeois family model based on marriage behind them.

The few existing studies that assess the content and implications of Hera Lind's novels, most notably Melani Schröter's essay "Die unehrlich verlogene Sauberfrau: Hera Lind's Romane 1989-1999" and Katarina Düringer's chapter on Lind, both only briefly discuss *Das Superweib* in their discussion of Lind's oeuvre.

Düringer provides merely a short plot summary, based on which she argues the novel's overall message to be "the emancipated woman of the nineties has no husband anymore, but instead three lovers, who manage her life and love, and in addition a nanny"

(41).[44] Furthermore, she notes that Franziska's unintentional career would not be possible without the help of others (41). In this context, the scholar highlights the narrative's general lack of female characters enjoying an actual career, since the majority of employed female protagonists in this novel are shown in traditional female occupations (45), such as secretaries or waitresses.[45] While Düringer remarks in only a short side note that the character of Sabine, the wife of Franziska's lover Martin (45), poses an exception to this rule, Schröter provides a more detailed analysis regarding the representation of career women in Lind's oeuvre, including Sabine. As a result, Schröter claims, "women who intent to make a career or obtain positions of power fulfill the cliché of the coldhearted career woman" in Lind's novels (40).[46] Yet neither Düringer nor Schröter discuss these representations in much detail, particularly regarding the relationship of these women to their children.

Perhaps the best evidence for the shape of Lind's feminism is found in the depiction of Martin's wife Sabine who studied business administration, made it into an upper management position, and who "absolutely wanted to return to work" after she gave birth to their child (246).[47] When she is first introduced, accompanying her husband and children on a walk in the park where they meet Franziska and her sons, the reader

[44] "Die emanziperte Frau der Neunziger hat keines Ehemann mehr! Dafü drei Lover, die fü sie Leben und Liebe regeln, dazu eine Kindderfrau" (41).
[45] This is actually where the reader encounters the only East German protagonist, a waitress from Saxony, who always askes the children where their father was (22).
[46] "Frauen, welche gewollt Karriere machen oder Machtpositionen einnehmen, entsprechen dem Klischee der gefühlskalten Karrierefrau" (Schröter 40).
[47] "wollte unbedient wieder arbeiten gehen" (246).

learns that Sabine is "pretty and back-haired . . . [and] dressed very fashionably" (89).[48] The portrait then veers toward stereotype. Worried about her appearance, she refrains from playing with Martin, Franziska, and the children, while smoking a cigarette in the distance (89). Franziska then thinks about whether she "should try to lighten up her sour temper" (90),[49] but decides otherwise as this woman obviously "had no interest in our childish, silly behavior" (91).[50] Only concerned with her looks and seemingly uninterested in her children, Lind evidently utilizes the tropes of the *Rabenmutter* to downplay any assumptions that Sabine might be considered an appropriate role model for her heroine.

This depiction is echoed when Franziska is on her reading tour, a well-dressed young businesswoman enters her train compartment, "a little designer suitcase" in the one hand and a baby girl in the other (222-23).[51] While the mother is "carefully styled . . . with overly long blue-painted fingernails" the infant "had a sore, grubby face" (223).[52] When Franziska decides to clean the child up after the mother leaves the compartment to buy cigarettes, she discovers the baby's "bottom had a striking similarity with that of a baboon" (224).[53] Apparently the mother did not change the diapers often enough, causing the baby's bottom to be all red and inflamed. Like Martin's wife Sabine, this woman is presented by Lind as more interested in her own appearance than in her child's most

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48 "hübsch und schwarzhaarig . . . [und] ganz modisch gekleidet" (89).
49 "versuchen sollte, ihr sauertöpfisches Gemüt ein wenig zu erheitern" (90).
50 "hatte keinen Sinn für unser kindliches, albernes Tun." (91).
51 "ein Designerköfferchen" (222-23).
52 "sorgfält gestylt . . . mit überlangen blaulackierten Fingernägeln" and "hatte wunde, schmuddelige Gesichtshaut" (223).
53 "Popo hatte starke Ähnlichkeit mit dem eines Pavians" (224).

basic needs. Her lead character, Franziska, compares herself to this example of a "bad" mother, concluding "A single working mother like myself. And yet so different" (227).[54]

Nevertheless, the situation in the novel is by no means that black and white. While Franzika in both scenes indeed appears in a more favorable light compared to the two "selfish" career women who neglect their children, Lind repeatedly frames her heroine in a similar way, which both Düringer and Schröter neglect to mention. In contrast to the many young women "who all had come to terms with their role as only-a-housewife" (77),[55] Franziska wanted to make use of her talents and combine motherhood and a career. Hence, her character informs the reader in direct speech "I wanted to have both—cold-hearted, egocentric, and greedy as I once was" (160).[56] Tellingly, Lind utilizes the exact words frequently used to describe *Rabenmütter* in her character's self-analysis. Moreover, the protagonist states she had "hardly any housewifely qualities worth mentioning" (17),[57] and compared to Alma, the mother of her lawyer and later lover Enno, who could prepare "wonderful fried potatoes . . . and heavy, calorie-intensive cheesecakes" (12), [58] Franziska lacks such abilities, "[l]ike so much else that is part of the housewifely domain" (12).[59] Hence, even after Enno convinces her to buy an expensive kitchen for her new house, she "did not want to cook" (124),[60] but continued to eat out.

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54 "Eine alleinerziehende beruftätige Mutter, wie ich. Und doch so anders" (227).

55 "die sich sämtlichst mit ihrer Rolle als Nur-Hausfrau abgefunden hatten" (77).
56 "Ich wollte eben einfach beides, hartherzig, egozentrisch und gierig wie ich nun einmal war" (160).
57 "kaum nennenswerte hausfrauliche Qualitäten" (17).
58 "wunderbare Bratkartoffeln . . . und schwere, kalorienreiche Käsetorten backen" (12).
59 "Wie so vieles andere, was im hausfraulichen Bereich angesiedelt ist" (12).
60 "wollte nicht kochen" (124).

Strikingly, Lind's heroine therefore also displays the characteristics of the "inferior housewife," another trope commonly associated with "bad" mothers, as illustrated in the narratives by Böll and Wohmann discussed in the previous chapters. "Bad mother" thus becomes a question of *attitude* rather than domestic performance—this woman will *never* wash her windows weekly, as the "deutsche Hausfrau" of yore was supposed to.

Throughout the novel the author presents her readers with similar mixed messages about Franziska's character, inviting them to question a number of stereotypes regarding "bad" mothers, particular in their relationship to the combination of work and motherhood. Along these lines, the protagonist poses the question: "Why should it not be possible, for a reasonably average intelligent person whose only disability is being a member of the female gender, to hold down a job" (160)[61] while also having children? Lind leaves this question for the reader to answer, but the word usage clearly indicates that the answer is found in a woman's gender. Gender is her "only disability" that keeps her from working and raising a family, something men do all the time. Several pages later, the author further elaborates on gender-related issues as reasons why more German women find themselves unable to combine motherhood and employment.

Pointing out to her readership the significant factor of social pressure when stereotypes like the *Rabenmutter* is imposed on them, as documented by social research earlier in this chapter, Lind writes:

> Of course, there might be female beings who cannot let go of their darling children and the delight of their meticulous home . . . But one should not force

[61] "Warum sollte es nicht möglich sein, als geistig halbwegs durchschnittlich ausgestatteter Mensch mit der einzigen Behinderung weiblichen Geschlechts zu sein, einer Arbeit nachzugehen" (160).

> EVERY woman to do so. If a [woman] does not want to, one should grant her the mercy to arrange her life in an otherwise meaningful way. Without her having to feel instantly like a raven mother or slut" (166).[62]

In this short passage, Lind comments on the negative attitudes many German women striving to combine work and motherhood are confronted with by a society that seemingly believes a working woman cannot be a good mother, and she asks her reader to decide how and whether this attitude "forces" women to stay at home with their children.

Hence, with these insertions, the author suggests that it is not entirely a free choice for women whether or not to exclusively devote themselves to childcare and household chores or return to the workforce. Furthermore, the author indicates what a waste of talent is implicated in this formulation, which would require good mothers (like herself) to also be good cooks and good housekeepers, which she cannot be—and does not need to be to take care of her own children. That choice is built into the novel in other ways. Franziska encounters "really, really many really, really nice young women . . . who all had passed their university entrance exams AND subsequently studied to earn a degree, in order to drive their children around in minivans," (129),[63] as well as taking care of their households, instead of capitalizing on their professional training. This speaks to the documented high number of well-qualified German women dropping out of the workforce once they have children, which in turn explains why mothers still can hardly

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[62] "Gut, es mag ja weibliche Wesen geben, die sich vor Wonne über ihre herzigen Kinder und ihr properes Eigenheim nicht lassen können. . . .Aber man sollte nicht JEDE Frau dazu verdonnern. Wenn eine nicht will, soll man ihr die Gnade gewähren, ihr Leben anderweitig sinnvoll zu gestallten. Ohne daß sie sich gleich als Rabenmutter oder Schlampe fühlen muß" (166).

[63] "ganz, ganz viele ganz, ganz nette junge Frauen . . . die alle Abitur gemacht UND studiert haben, um ihre Kinder im Kleinbus durch die Gegebd zu fahren" (129-30).

be found in executive positions, despite the statistically increasing number of females enjoying a higher education that would enable them to take on leading roles as professionals. The reason Lind's narrative lacks female characters enjoying an actual career, as noted by Düringer, therefore merely mirrors social reality at the time the novel was written, not the women's own desires in a novel that shows women in careers (albeit with fairy tale earnings, rather than hourly wage employment that provides only slightly more than the government's *Elterngeld*).

Simultaneously, the author also highlights that women being forced into the role of the stay-at-home mother is not an educational or class-bound phenomenon. Lind underscores this by having her lead character meet two women named Susanne, the first from the upper classes, the second a welfare recipient, whom she runs across at "mother-child gymnastics" (30).[64] The latter exemplifies one of the many activities mothers have since the 1970s been "expected" to be involved in to facilitate their children's development,[65] reflecting the unprecedented commitment of German women of all classes to child development and childcare. While the upper-class Susanne is introduced as "well-groomed lady" (30),[66] wearing a ruffled blouse and a pleated skirt, "the OTHER Susanne was blessed with long unkempt black hair, always a smelling slightly of healthy mother sweat and never wearing a utensil something as useless as, for instance, a bra"

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64 "Beim Mutter-Kind Turnen" (30)

65 Along these lines, the main character also repeatedly refers to her knowledge of children's advice literature, especially "the parent magazine 'Blossom and Deterioration'" ("das Elternmagazin 'Gedeih und Verderb'") (28). Yet as this very ironic title shows, Lind approaches such advice literature very different—and much less serious—than for instance her fellow writer Wohmann.

66 "gepflegte Dame" (30).

(31).[67] The visual accentuation of words in all capital letters is a technique Lind frequently applies in her novels (Schröter 36). In this case, however, it seems particularly striking, because "the other" denotes that the second Susanne is not only different (as clearly someone with an alternative background), but also it implies the first Susanne (clearly middle class or above) to be the norm as basis for any comparison.

Subsequently, Lind shares with her readers that "the OTHER Susanne" was the mother of two "illegitimate metropolitan rat kids" (31),[68] which are described as dirty, probably even having lice (32). In contrast, the children of the upper-class Susanne are depicted as clean and nicely dressed (34), and they are part of a traditional nuclear family—there were no "fatherless children in these illustrious circles" (30).[69] Despite the fact that this representation underscores how women of all classes are relegated to the role of the mother caring for her children, it nevertheless simultaneously shows a familiar bias in terms of class and marital status, which we have seen in works dating back to previous periods: the "bad" mother belongs to the lower classes, she is a single mother, and she is marked as deviant from the norm, which is essentially bourgeois. Lind thus underscores in this representation that the norm for mothers is still framed in these bourgeois terms: they are married, with husband breadwinners who earn enough money to prevent their families from having to live on welfare. And the mothers know how to dress, comb their hair, wash clothes, and bathe the children.

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[67] "Die ANDERE Susanne war mit langen ungekämmten schwarzen Haaren gesegnet, immer leicht nach gesundem Mutterschweiß riechend und niemals mit einem so überflüssigen Utensil wie etwa einem BH angetan" (31).

[68] "unehelicher Großstadtrattenkinder" (31).

[69] "vaterlose Kinder in diesen erlauchten Kreisen" (30).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter with reference to the author's biography, *Das Superweib* was written by a West German writer rooted in middle-class values, and the novel clearly reflects this. Examples thereof seen so far were Lind's use of the negative tropes associated with the *Rabenmutter*, characterizing working mothers as "selfish" and "coldhearted," as well as identifying "bad" mothers by describing them as inferior cooks, housewives, and caretakers of their children. At the same time, however, the author offers a more ambivalent representation of those attributes by showing that the heroine shared those same judgmental adjectives and characteristics. The above comparison between the two Susannes must be seen in this light, as well. Lind starts in her narrative to utilize oppositional semantics in reference to social class and marital status, the latter not only emphasizing whether or not a child was born out of wedlock, but also whether a father is present in the lives of children. Yet then she asks more of her readers in differentiating between "good" and "bad" mothers, recalling Böll's *Haus ohne Hüter*. But unlike Böll's oppositional characterizations of the chaste, upper-class Nella and the promiscuous, working-class Wilma—representing two extremes—Lind's divorced middle-class heroine Franzika is situated in between the two Susannes, providing a less strictly black and white motherly image to her readers.

Evidently, Lind's character Franziska invites the novel's readers to reconsider a number of West German stereotypes with respect to women's roles as mothers. But as Schröter observes (40), what differentiates Franziska from the other employed women in the novel is that the protagonist did not actively seek a career, but rather that it "just happened" to her. Arguably, Lind circumvents in this detail the contemporaneous

"problem of choice" between either becoming an exclusive stay-at-home mother or returning to the workforce, which Franziska's peers have to face. Furthermore, Lind's heroine hires the nanny Paula who takes care of housekeeping, cooking, and childrearing as soon as work requires the protagonist to leave the house for the first time—her solution to any dilemmas falls squarely within the parameters of comfortable middle-class domesticity. The character comments in this context: "how fast woman as mother can be replaced! I dare one to suggest that those poor little souls would be harmed" (217),[70] if their mothers go to work. Yet the text again includes a caveat: Franziska's children are well taken care of by her "replacement mother." Lind thus erases any possible *Rabenmutter* stigma associated with children being placed in day care facilities, where they "all become victims of working mothers" (20).[71] Yet hiring a nanny is not an option for the majority of German women, partially explaining why critics consider the novel to be a "fairy tale."

The fairy tale, however, is not only a Cinderella story. Very realistic, for example, is how the author stresses in her novel the issue of the gender-based labor division within the traditional family—the expectation that women take on the role of the exclusive caretaker of household and children. By hiring Paula, Franziska thus experiences something decisively feminist: "that which men generally take for granted: they hire a woman to take care of their children, to iron their laundry, to take their phone calls, to make them dinner and to keep all inconvenient everyday- and household matters away

[70] "wie schnell frau als Mutter ersetzbar wird! Da soll noch einer behaupten, die armen kleinen Seelchen trügen Schäden davon!" (217).
[71] "alle Opfer von beruftätigen Müttern" (20).

from them" (180).[72] Ironically, then, Franziska asks Paula not whether she wants to work for her, but: "Would you like to be my wife?" (176).[73] Lind's narrative therefore seemingly suggests that the biggest challenge for women to overcome in achieving gender equality is the bourgeois family model based on marriage with its the gender-based division of labor, an aspect which contemporary critics Düringer, Oelinger, and Schröter have ignored in evaluating the novel. In doing so, the author has injected into her novel not only decidedly feminist points of view, but she also repeats debates that had come to be identified with the family model of the former GDR. Related to the latter, as I will demonstrate in what follows, the author actually proposes that women must leave traditional family forms behind them to maintain their financial and emotional independence, enabling them to exercise control over their own lives and thus to make "free" choices of their own.

Already in the opening scene of the novel, when Franziska meets Alma for the first time, Lind reminds her readers that it is actually possible for women to manage very well on their own, a point she makes by recalling the *Trümmerfrauen* after WWII. It is thus no coincidence that the older woman starts a conversation by "cheerfully" telling Franzsika that immediately after the war her husband "one day went to America and never returned" (7),[74] leaving her and the toddler Enno behind, whom she subsequently had to raise as a single mother while working to support the two of them. While

[72] "das, was Männer grundsätzlich für selbstverständlich halten: Sie engagieren eine Frau dafür, daß sie ihre Kinder versorgt, ihre Wäsche bügelt, ihre Anrufe entgegen nimmt, ihnen etwas zu essen macht und alle lästigen Alltags- und Haushaltsangelegenheiten von ihnen fernhält." (180).
[73] "Wollen Sie meine […] Frau werden?" (176)
[74] "fröhlich" and "ging eines Tages nach Amerika und kam nie wieder zurück" (7).

Franziska feels sorry for Alma, the older woman assures her "Oh, that was a good time, in spite of everything!" (12).[75] Not only had Alma seemingly not felt embittered after her husband abandoned her and the child, but she conveys to her new friend Franziska that it still was "a good time," something the character repeatedly states over the course of the novel,[76] emphasizing that she managed perfectly well without a husband. At the very onset of the novel, then, Lind thus introduces the major theme of her narrative in the form of a historical flashback: the notion that once women are by themselves, they can rise to any occasion, which includes successfully bringing up their children alone, which might actually not be such a horrible thing after all, as the example of Alma suggests. German women had done it before, and the novel begins to make the argument that it might be time again to do so.

To further emphasize the benefits of women remaining single, Lind provides readers with a glance into Franziska's unhappy marriage with Will and her subordinate position as his dependent wife, which Lind compares to that of domestic help. Yet the author also stresses that Franziska's situation is not an isolated case, but rather a common problem for all married women. In an inner monologue, the main protagonist states: "At one point every man meets a maid. Instead of employing her as such, he marries her, because he believes it will be cheaper" (37).[77] At this point, the reader might realize just how easy it is to replace the word "woman" with "maid," underscoring Lind's apparent

[75] "Ach, das war eine schöne Zeit, trotz allem" (12).
[76] See for instance "ich war ja auch alleinerziehend, und dann in der Nachkriegszeit . . . ach, wissen Sie, das war eine schöne Zeit, trotz alledem" (60).
[77] "Jeder Mann lernt irgendwann mal eine Dienstmagd kennen. Statt sie als solche einzustellen, heiratet er sie, weil er glaubt, daß das billiger kommt" (37).

message that that the terms are exchangeable in the eyes of men.

Next, the writer points to the unequal economic nature of the purported partners in a marriage, in which the wife performs "the labor of love" for her husband's benefit, rather than her own. In this context, the author further clarifies the role allocation among husband and wife in traditional marriages: "He actualizes his intelligence and his creative drive, she finds deep intellectual satisfaction by folding underpants" (161-62).[78] Lind further emphasizes this idea by describing Will's attitudes toward household chores. When Franziska over the course of her marriage "once in a while suggested that he could empty the dishwasher as well, take out the diaper bucket, or make a sandwich that was not solely intended for personal consumption," her "spouse completely lost it" (76),[79] threating to leave her and the child. In his opinion, these were tasks to be performed by women, not men. As soon as Franziska uttered "only the slightest protest" demanding "equality" (76),[80] her husband referred to that as "stupid women's libber talk," something that would stem from reading too many "of the so-called women's books" (76).[81]

That his needs always came before those of his wife is additionally underscored in a scene describing Will cheating on Franziska while she was nine months pregnant with his second child (39). After "a memorable talk" (41)[82] informing Franziska about the affair and insisting that all three parties involved must openly accept the challenging

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78 "Er selbstverwirklicht seine Intelligenz und seinen Bastlertrieb, sie findet tiefe seelische Befriedigung, in dem sie Unterhosen faltet" (161-62).

79 ". . . hin und wieder anregte, daß er auch mal die Spülmachine ausräumen, den Windeleimer runterbringen oder sogar mal ein Brot schmieren möge, das nicht zum ausschließlichen Eigenverzehr bestimmt sein, rastete mein Gatte völlig aus" (76).

80 "mit ansatzweisem Aufmucken" and "Gleichberechtigung"

81 "blödes Emanzengeschwafel" and "sogenannte Frauenbücher" (76).

82 "einer denkwürdigen Aussprache" (41).

situation (42), Will suggested that Franziska could sleep on a sofa bed in the same bedroom he shared with his new girlfriend. On second thought, however, he reconsidered this suggestion because his newborn son would probably cry at night, and he needed his sleep (42). Clearly, for the egocentric Will, his wife was supposed to put his needs before her own, regardless of the circumstances. Not surprisingly, Franziska "felt lonely, abandoned, and overburdened" in her marriage (85).[83] Her husband, however, never noticed this. His only explanation for why Franziska had filed for divorce was thus that she had become an "insensitive, militant feminist" (215).[84] Remember, however, that her lawyer, and not she, had initiated that divorce action.

Realizing that he could not live without a woman taking care of his household, Will in the end wants to get Paula, Franziska's maid and nanny, as part of the divorce agreement. However, unwilling to let Paula go, Franziska ironically suggests that Will marry another woman who can once more fulfill the role of his maid, explaining she cannot do the same—and thus has to keep Paula. Deciding about who gets to keep the maid, the male judge chairing the divorce proceeding rules in Franziska's favor. Even if Franziska would marry again, he explains, one could not expect her future husband to contribute to household chores the same way a potential future wife could for Will as "women are much more skilled and willing [to perform duties] in the household than men" (379).[85] Consequently, that judge argues that Franziska needs Paula more than Will does, justifying his decision. Yet the judge admits that "women are not what they used to

[83] "einsam gefühlt, im Stich gelassen und überfordert" (85).
[84] "unsensible, militante Frauenrechtlerin" (215).
[85] "Frauen sind viel geschickter und williger im Haushalt als Männer" (379).

be" (379),[86] making it perhaps harder for Will to find a wife who accepts becoming his maid. Significantly, Lind thus signals her readers that the underlying conditions of marriage and its gender-based division of labor seemingly cannot be changed, at least in men's eyes. But that does not mean women have to put up with those persistent inequalities, as they at least have gained the freedom to leave an unhappy marriage.

Not surprisingly, Franziska decides to never remarry, because she does "not want to become the object of male vanity again" (119).[87] At the same time, however, the protagonist admits that she "would never be happy without men, unless in the final stage of [her] bodily decay, and that there was an enormous difference between 'marriageless' and 'menless'" (294).[88] Hence, the heroine plans to enjoy her newly regained independence, but not alone. With Enno by her side when she feels like it, Franziska thus finds happiness in the end, yet without having to give up her career as a writer and her decision-making authority as a single mother.

In sum, Lind's character Franziska presents her audience with an alternative motherly image in this novel, one that is not depicted in strictly black and white terms, but one which is arguably not entirely realistic—women have changed, but the patriarchy has not. Franziska's unintentional career as a writer that allows her to hire a nanny is nothing the average reader can emulate in reality. However, the author is very aware of this, which she even underscores by letting one of Franziska's readers during her promotional reading tour remark: "This is the story of Cinderella transposed into our

[86] "die Frauen sin auch nicht mehr dat, wat se mal waren" (379).
[87] "will nicht wieder zum Spielball männlicher Eitelkeiten werden" (119).
[88] "niemals, es sei den im letzten Stadium meines körperlichen Verfalls, männerlos glücklich sein würde und daß zwischen 'ehelos' und 'männerlos' ein gewaltiger Unterschied bestünde" (294).

time" (235).[89] Yet this is a Cinderella who "got lucky" by being divorced, not one who planned an exit into a career but simply one who gained her life through lucky circumstances. Past scholars have focused almost exclusively on this aspect of the novel. What they have missed discussing, though, is the way in which Lind very accurately presents a number of issues relevant to the average German women at the time the novel was written—and in some respects even since then. Lind points out to her audience what the negative stereotypes confronting working women with children are and the social peer pressure they experience, which causes many mothers to stay at home instead of returning to the workforce, particularly when the children are small. This in turn is an oblique comment on the fact that many well-educated women can be found rather in playgroups than in management positions because of this societal pressure, a sad reality in Germany. Moreover, the author elaborates on how the problem of gender-based labor division in marriage deprives women of a higher social status when they become wives and mothers: there is no public recognition for doing laundry and driving children around. Marriage is presented in this novel actually as a state-sanctioned institution of oppression, as demonstrated in the divorce court scene, in which a woman is treated as a maid who feels "proud to stand in the shadow of the spouse" (9),[90] as Lind writes.

These are very "feminist" themes for a novel that purports to simply entertain its readership. Hence, I maintain that while Lind indeed uses the tropes of pulp novels, she utilizes these elements to camouflage a very radical message: if women want to achieve

[89] "Des isch ja die Schtory vom Aschebrödel nur in die heuitige Zeiit verlägt!" (235).
[90] "stolz im Schatten des Gatten zu stehen" (9).

gender equality, they must find alternative forms of living, outside of the norm of the bourgeois family, which the author presents as responsible for women's lack of agency, independence, and a social status equal to that of men. Written at a time when feminism and critical political engagement were widely unpopular, particularly among Germany's female population, Lind's novel nonetheless illustrates the fallacy of believing that gender equality had been achieved in German society as well as that feminism was not needed anymore by showing what happens to women as soon as they have children. *Das Superweib* can thus very well be read as criticizing patriarchal relations in society and calling for a revision of family structures as well as of the policies that privatize the family. In this context, Lind's novel might even be understood as a critique of choosing the West German model as the common policy framework after reunification. Lind's narrative recommends a social environment in which wifehood is not critical to becoming a mother, where women can financially support themselves and their children, and enjoy a stable social status according to their gifts—all recalling women's experiences in the former GDR—something contemporaneous readers likely would have noticed. None of the "serious" women's novels at the time presented such a groundbreaking message,[91] let alone to such to a broad mainstream readership, that not only challenged German women's social *status quo*, but also made the case against devaluating everything "coming from the east."

Thus, while Lind's novel might not present a completely realistic storyline, it

[91] Examples of high literature emerging at the same time, show the mother embedded mostly in a context of memory and morning (Eigler), unable to escape the old gender roles, and thus continuing to be a victim of patriarchy (Bauer). See also Herminghouse in this context.

provides its readers at least with the possibility of exploring and imagining alternative pathways of what women *can* do. In this respect, the author also significantly influenced the category of "new" popular women's literature, namely by adding a heroine with children to this genre's dominant stock character of the successful single woman (Düringer 197). Yet remedying this omission in the standard stereotypes simultaneously is the crux of Lind's narrative and its ultimate weakness: although the author emphasizes women's need to find alternatives to the bourgeois family structure, the narrative still frames women primarily as mothers, thus occluding images of females opting out of motherhood. As we shall see in the following, final section of this chapter, this stereotype will change in more contemporary German novels, but their failure will still be Lind's: they cannot influence the representation of the *ideal* woman, who continues to be cast as mother in contemporary Germany.

THE MOTHER IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN NOVELS: SOME CONCLUSIONS

Hera Lind's *Das Superweib* did indeed pave the way for the literary representations of women as mothers outside of strictly black and white terms, as documented above. But along with the continuing process of "normalization" in German society after the fall of the Wall, the more ambiguous sorts of images that Lind offered began to vanish, and the either/or dialectics that had traditionally framed motherhood in German literature returned. Depictions of motherhood in postmillennial works attest to that continuing tradition, according to Alexandra Merley Hill (2008). This critic

documents how, by the early 2000s, some authors have actually begun to explicitly bemoan the feminist legacy and its effect on motherhood in their works, arguing instead for a return to traditional notions of femininity that includes a woman's role as stay-at-home mother,[92] while others still suggest the exact opposite.[93] As we shall see in the remainder of this chapter, these binary poles prevail in the map of popularly available representations of women's roles in German society. Hence, despite their many differences, the two examples of successful contemporary novels I will discuss next both equally underscore that women still cannot have it all, yet still operate on a dichotomy that Vicki Baum had recognized almost a century earlier: a woman can either be independent and have a career or be a good mother.

The first novel illustrating my claim is Monika Peetz's *Die Dienstagsfrauen* (The tuesday women, 2010), which, like the other novels featured in this study, has been chosen due to its high visibility. Not only was the book among the bestselling novels in Germany in 2011, [94] but it was subsequently also adapted for the screen, airing on the state-owned TV-channel ARD for the first time in 2013.[95] Since then, the author has produced two sequels, both of which were likewise turned into films attracting mainstream audiences. Given its continuing popularity with millions of readers, any discussion of contemporary representations of motherhood can hardly ignore Peetz's work, which I will briefly summarize below.

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[92] Eva Herman, *Das Eva-Prinzip*.
[93] See Haaf, Klingner, and Streidl, *Wir Alphamädchen*.
[94] See "Monika Peetz."
[95] The film was produced 2011 and first screed on TV on 29 Aug. 2013. Since then the film has had multiple reruns, the last one on 7 Feb 2015. See "Die Dienstagsfrauen"on the ARD web site.

Die Dienstagsfrauen tells the story of five women who once met in an evening French class and since then have become best friends, despite their differences in age; they meet the first Tuesday of each month to continue their friendship. Of the five women, two have children: the "ingenious" heart surgeon Eva (8),[96] "who once was the most ambitious of the quintet" (29)[97]and became an *Übermutter* (super-mother) (56), and the "cool" lawyer Caroline, whose career arc rose quickly while raising her children (8).[98] Although the novel seemingly focuses on the childless Judith—who has recently lost her husband to cancer and is now finishing his pilgrimage to Lourdes accompanied by her four friends—it is the lives of Eva and Caroline which actually transform themselves over the course of the novel. Here again, a religious motif adds an irony: Lourdes is a pilgrimage site where the sick are miraculously healed.

During the pilgrimage, the first time in fifteen years that Eva has been separated from her family, the character realizes that she completely lost her individual identity by marrying and having children. After 15 years devoted exclusively to her family, Eva "did not even know anymore what tasted good to her" (29).[99] Determined to reconnect with her lost self, Eva continues the pilgrimage and her self-discovery even after the group has reached Lourdes, and her friends return home. An apparently changed Eva then applies for a position in a hospital to resume her career, and by the close of the novel, the

[96] "patent" (8)
[97] "einmal die Ehrgeizigste des Quintetts" (29).
[98] "kühl" (8).
[99] "wusste sie nicht einmal mehr, was ihr selbst schmeckte" (29).

character accepts that her neatly organized household will descend into chaos, and although not all of her family's demands are met, at least her own are.

Caroline on the other hand discovers that her husband had had an affair not only with Judith, but numerous other women, because she was supposedly too focused on her career and thus neglected his emotional needs. Back from Lourdes, Caroline separates from her husband, yet cannot help it but blame her own "selfish" motives for the end of her marriage. Still, in the last scene of the novel, all five women are reunited, and the story ends on a positive note, when the narrator informs the reader in the last sentence: "at this moment, she [Caroline] was happy with herself and the world. And with everything that was faced with. Tomorrow." (319).[100]

While Eva and Caroline thus seemingly both found contentment in the end, it comes at a price: Peetz's narrative still frames the successful combination of work and traditional motherhood as mutually exclusive. A happy medium between either losing one's identity or becoming a *Rabenmutter* (as in Eva's case) appears here to be as impossible as having a successful career and an intact family (Caroline's). But here the novel gets more complicated. It seems that the three women without children do not have to face such dilemmas. Strikingly, however, and in contrast to Eva and Caroline, none of them is presented in a way that would allow readers to identify with them: Judith betrays her best friend, Estelle is a superficial *nouvelle-riche* who loves to spend her husband's money on international shopping sprees, and designer Kiki has no idea about how to act

[100] "In diesem Moment war sie zufrieden. Mit sich und der Welt. Und mit allem, was auf sie zukam. Morgen" (319).

responsibly, which applies to her love life as much as to her finances. Hence, while Peetz indeed shows readers characters without children, the manner in which they are portrayed casts them as anything but *ideal* women—these "success stories" are not positive figures. Furthermore, the author allows these characters to remain at the margins. The focus of Peetz's novel remains on mothers and their struggles with this particular social role, offering her readership few alternative images. Instead, her narrative underscores that women still have to choose between a career and children, and that a happy medium seems almost impossible.

Critically acclaimed writer Inger-Maria Mahlke likewise illustrates the difficulties of women as mothers in her narrative *Rechnung Offen!* (Open Bill, 2013), which *Die Zeit* reviewer David Hugendick calls "a cold-hearted book" due to its depiction of contemporary society as lacking emotional warmth, responsibility, and altruism. [101] Although this social novel is anything but a popular read with mainstream audiences, I decided to include it in the discussion on contemporary representations of motherhood, because Mahlke's narrative, centering on the owners and tenants of a run-down apartment building in Berlin Neukölln, features predominantly protagonists that are women with children (in a part of one-time West Berlin that is most densely populated with "foreigners"). In doing so, the author stresses that the "norm" for German women still is to have children, but in a different way. All but one of the six reoccurring female characters in *Rechnung Offen!* either is a mother or becomes pregnant over the course of the novel. Among these women, two characters stand out: the homeowner and law

[101] "ein herzloses Buch"

professor Theresa (Ebba's mother) and their down-on-her-luck tenant Manuela, the mother of Lucas. Although the two women have little in common in terms of their social status and personal characteristics, they share a lack of emotional warmth and responsibility toward their children.

Mahlke portrays the relationship between Theresa and her daughter Ebba as difficult from the onset of the novel. Theresa, herself "slender and beautiful" (52),[102] frequently criticizes her daughter Ebba's looks and full figure, contributing to the young woman's already underdeveloped self-confidence. Moreover, Theresa expects perfection from her daughter in every aspect of life, ranging from academics to relationships. Unable to live up to her mother's high standards, Ebba eventually gives up trying. She drops out of her degree program and starts taking drugs, which goes unnoticed by her mother, who at this point is more concerned with her own declining career and troubled marriage and thus is unable to see through all of the lies Ebba tells to maintain her parents' financial support. In an attempt to start over toward the end of the novel, Ebba decides to visit and stay with her grandmother for some time, where she finally finds the unconditional love and attention she has been looking for her whole life. Nevertheless, Theresa convinces her daughter to come back home by declaring: "For me the most important thing is that you are doing well, and that you are happy" (269).[103] The last scene of the novel, however, suggests this is not true, and that nothing will change for

[102] "schlank und schön" (52).
[103] "Für mich ist das Wichtigste, dass es dir gutgeht, dass du zufrieden bist" (269).

Ebba upon her return, as her mother silently agrees with her husband's opinion that one should not be rewarded for "repeatedly lying with attention and sympathy" (282).[104]

The "apathetic" single mother Manuela likewise pays little attention to her young son Lucas (67).[105] She does not even provide for his most basic needs, such as food and clean clothes (16-20), fulfilling traditional stereotypes of the nonbourgeois mother. Based on his dreadful appearance, other mothers on the playground prevent their children from playing with the boy. In contrast to Theresa, however, Manuela's lack of attention for her son originates in her depression, caused by a hopeless financial situation due to having to raise Lucas alone after the child's father deserted them. Manuela's condition improves only for a short period of time, when she gets the opportunity to work as a dominatrix in a brothel. The protagonist feels things are finally getting better, she is optimistic and hopeful about the future, she even "smile[s] again" (142),[106] finally able to adequately support herself and her son, so they can get off welfare (153). During this time, Manuela not only cleans the apartment, buys food, and does the laundry, but she also shows Lucas love and affection. But once she loses her steady clients to another prostitute, her desperation returns and reaches a climax: she decides to begin a new life someplace else. In doing so, Manuela leaves some money for Lucas on the kitchen table and simply disappears, leaving the boy behind, seemingly without remorse. After living by himself unnoticed by anyone for weeks, a fire in the building prompts the police to check on all

104 "fortgesetztes Lügen mit Aufmerksamkeit und Anteilnahme" (282).
105 "apathisch" (67).
106 "lächelte wieder" (142).

tenants, and his mother's absence is finally discovered. By the close of the novel, Lucas moves in with his grandfather, while his mother is arrested.

Strikingly, both children of contemporary mothers, Ebba and Lucas, find the emotional warmth they are looking for and a supportive environment in living with their grandparents, not their mothers. Mahlke's narrative thus implicitly suggests the older generation and associated traditional family values, established gender roles, and "motherly virtues" still seem to be necessary for children to grow up and be accepted and to become productive members of society. The author underscores this notion particularly by indirectly blaming the character of Theresa for Ebba's body issues and drug addiction. Instead of being portrayed as a caring mother, devoted to the well-being of her daughter, Theresa's character is depicted as concentrating on her career rather than her family. In addition, the protagonist is negatively coded as being focused on appearance more than anything else. Consequently, Theresa appears to readers as the stereotypical cold-hearted *Rabenmutter* type of failed bourgeois, who is unable to be a good mother by definition and is thus responsible for her daughter's issues.

The case of Manuela, on the other hand, is different. She is not a "selfish" career woman, but a victim instead, who eventually works as a prostitute, with the sole goal of providing a better future for herself and her son. The novel implies that the protagonist cannot take a full-time job that pays enough to secure a decent standard of living, because Manuela has nobody to watch Lucas and can only find occupations well below her formal training, echoing the documented challenges for German women with children finding employment. As a result, the character is forced to live on welfare, making a little money

as an assistant in a bakery, a job she dislikes. Despite all her efforts, Manuela's income barely grows over the poverty line. With this representation, the author explicitly points to the difficult financial situation especially single mothers experience in contemporary German society, with 40% of single mothers having a monthly income of less than 1,300 Euro (Bertram 20). These women cannot support themselves and their children adequately on their own and so have to rely on welfare, because the current socioeconomic framework prevents them from successfully combining work and motherhood. Hence, "a segment of single mothers complains that they are at the end of their tether and suffer from social restrictions [that confine them] to the role of the mother" (Bertram 26).[107] The character of Manuela is one of them and thus cannot really be judged a classic "bad" mother. Rather, mirroring the situation of thousands of German women raising their children alone, she is frustrated and exhausted by unfavorable conditions beyond her control, which make it impossible for her to be a proper "good" mother. In leaving Lucas behind by the close of the novel, Mahlke's character thus demonstrates what might happen when women with children, deprived of employment opportunities allowing them to make use of their skills, to enjoy social contacts, and to be financially independent, are driven to extremes by a state unwilling to adapt its family policies to new realities, instead holding on to an outdated framework, still based on a single male bread-winner and a dependent stay-at-home mother.

[107] "ein Teil der alleinerziehenden Frauen klagt darüber, oft am Ende ihrer Kräfte zu sein, unter den Einschränkungen der Mutterrolle zu leiden" (Bertram 26).

Though in different ways than Peetz, Mahlke's narrative underscores with the examples of Theresa and Manuela that the *ideal* German woman is still characterized as the married, stay-at-home mother devoted to her children, cut from a more or less bourgeois pattern. Moreover, the author acknowledges with her representations the stereotyped public expectations about the negative effects children supposedly suffer from, if women leave established gender roles behind them. Along these lines, it is thus hardly a coincidence that the novel's only mother figure casted in a positive light is the mother of Ümit, one of Lucas' friends. This married Turkish woman with children is not employed, but instead cooks, keeps her son and their apartment clean, and drives the children to afterschool activities, such as swimming (65), while her husband's income supports the family. Ironically, the virtues previously associated with the "good" German mother of the middle-class transfer in Mahlke's novel to be those of the Turkish mother, who in contrast to German women looking for independence and a career, seems to find fulfillment in household chores and taking care of her children. This move by the author suggests how far ideal and reality have moved apart. German women influenced by feminist ideas and striving for gender equality do not want to return to a state of domesticity. Even worse, if they are "forced" to, as in the case of Manuela, the outcome is still not desirable. The message of *Rechnung Offen!* can thus be seen as a depressing one: either obey traditional gender roles, like Ümit's mother, or prepare oneself for disaster, a notion that Mahlke's novel shares with Peetz's *Die Dienstagsfrauen*.

To conclude: despite an unprecedented wide range of roles available to women in contemporary German society, current literary representations continue to frame German

women predominantly as mothers, reflecting discourses that "a woman's place" is still considered to be at home, nurturing her children. In doing so, writers frequently emphasize that, while it is possible for women to follow different paths, the difficulties involved in escaping traditional gender roles persist. Yet the authors discussed here are by no means blind to the demands of feminism: they univocally highlight a variety of women's struggles with their roles as mother, underscoring that gender equality has not yet been achieved in the reunited Germany of the millennium. Motherhood, maintaining individual identity as well as independence, and contentment remain apparently irreconcilable.

When Düringer conducted her study about fifteen years ago, she assumed in her conclusion that the new popular women's literature of the nineties would soon turn into a "phased-out model" (208),[108] and that future literature by and for women would promote new social roles for them. Based on the evidence above, however, the scholar was only partially correct in her prediction: the positive, but arguably less realistic depictions of superwomen who can have it all, have indeed decreased in number. To my knowledge, Hera Lind remains the only German author whose novels at the present time still hold on to this kind of representation, perhaps explaining Lind's continued success with readers. The majority of contemporary popular women's novels like *Die Dienstagsfrauen*, on the other hand, offer readers more sober depictions of women as mothers. However, these books also do not promote new social roles for women, as Düringer projected they might. The same applies to current critical narratives, such as *Rechnung Offen!*. Hence, the

[108] "ein Auslaufmodel" (208).

social imaginary of the female audience for such novels continues to be influenced by the same old images, even as the novels acknowledge growing stresses on those roles.

Without new representations enabling women to imagine alternatives to what they *can* do, however, their *status quo* will likely not change. At this point, however, new images coming from within the German literary scene are not in sight. Perhaps, foreign novels can fill this gap. But at this point in time, when examining the 2014 German bestseller list, young adult novels by authors such as Ken Follett and John Green and historical thrillers by US authors dominated sales.[109] In any case, with the continuous fragmentation of the literary market since reunification, catering increasingly to special interest groups, it might be difficult to influence the social imaginary of enough German readers to ultimately initiate lasting change for German women imagining alternative, positive social roles other than that of the married stay-at-home mother.

[109] See "Jahresbestseller" in *Buchreport*.

Conclusion

This project set out to illuminate the interplay between representations of women as mothers in mass media (novels, magazines, films) and related public realities since the Wilhelmine Empire, in order to gain insight into Germany's shared social imaginary and the discourses around which it forms its cultural identity, explaining the persistence of the stay-at-home mother as the German womanly ideal into the twenty-first century.

As I documented in the introductory chapter of this study, with the rise of the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the latter nineteenth century, the ideal for adult females of the middle class was to become a wife and mother solely devoted to her husband's and children's needs. Accordingly, novels dating to the *Kaiserreich*, my project's point of departure, revealed public ideas about the limited prospects of young women as restricted to performing under the gender roles established by a bourgeois patriarchal point of view that dictated the rules for "proper" female behavior—rules held in place by depicting the catastrophe that awaits a female protagonist failing to adhere to them.

The powerlessness of women reflected in this era's literary representations, such as, for instance, those found in Helene Böhlau's *Halbtier!*, persists in the narratives of the Weimar Republic. Female members of society continue to be socialized to become wives

and mothers, despite the emergence of the New Woman movement and the occasional exceptions represented by a handful of influential women in charge of their lives and careers. Hence, in Weimar's women's novels, images of helpless, defenseless, and economically dependent women prevail, women unable to care adequately for their children and to escape a husband's or father's misguided or destructive domination. Only occasionally did the era's readers encounter "emancipated" female protagonists, such as Vicki Baum's Helene Willfüer or Irmgard Keun's Gilgi. However, even these characters are still not able to survive without the help of a few altruistic men who assist as Good Samaritans (in the case of Helene) or as the close of both novels suggest, their future ability to survive at all is uncertain (particularly in the case of Gilgi). Moreover, Baum's as well as Keun's novel's messages stress that even these females, who exemplify "good" women of the middle class, in the end live in a society that allows them to fulfill their motherly duties only at the expense of their chosen pursuits in a career or personal life. In contrast to the "selfish" women bemoaned in dominant discourses on the German family in crisis after WWI, these characters thus show their readership "the right thing to do." Such decisions were not necessarily the authors' alone. As the case of Vicki Baum suggests, this message was steered by her publisher Ullstein, who set strict parameters regarding what the company expected of a bestselling plot, including a happy ending in marriage.

My chapter on the Third Reich laid out a shift in public literary representations of women who under the new regime face positive futures as mothers. Consequently, novels depicting motherhood as problematic or negative were considered undesirable and

banned. When informed by National Socialist ideals, however, novels like those of writer Ina Seidel enjoyed the support of publishers and the literary industry, which heavily promoted her work. Although *Das Wunschkind* was written before 1933, as I have shown it became the blueprint for narratives centering on motherhood emerging during the National Socialist era. Like Seidel's Cornelie, Josefa Behrens-Totenohl's Magdalene, for instance, experiences her independence from men positively and even enjoys the possibility of combining meaningful work with motherhood, thus responding to the issues raised in the earlier narratives of the Weimar Republic. But women's broader opportunities and higher social status come at a price: the novels exemplify a shift from emphasizing women's sacrifice for the family toward valorizing women's sacrifice for the state, further anchoring the figure of the mother in her importance for the survival of the German nation, but not for the bourgeois family. This shift is additionally underscored by the era's striking absence of images showing mothers with children in the propaganda magazine *Signal* as well as in popular films.

My analysis of women's representation in novels appearing after Germany's return to "normalcy" after World War II, which was perceived as a necessary revival of more traditional gender roles, illustrates how women soon were deprived of the few positive changes Nazi politics had introduced in terms of women's economic dependency on a family-based support system. Postwar politics and critics focused on a return to patriarchal families, suppressing images of strong and independent women found in the narratives of the Third Reich along with the more negative ones. In doing so, they facilitated the process of forcing females back into the private sphere and into the role of

the stay-at-home mother, as Heinrich Böll's early postwar novel *Haus ohne Hüter* as well as my surveys of the women's magazine *Constanze* and 344 popular films eloquently attest to. As I have argued, Böll's narrative showcases and criticizes how women became social outcasts as soon as they tried to escape their "moral" duty to comply with traditional gender roles, which were promoted as the "norm" for all women in the FRG. Moreover, as archival evidence illustrates, Böll's narrative had been considerably changed before its publication due to the literary establishment's adherence to the public's restorative agenda. As in the case of Baum's work, his novel's message was altered in order to provide what publishers and editors considered "appropriate" female role models for their audience.

The historical turning point of 1968 and the beginning of a second-wave feminist movement in West Germany marked the beginning of a new era in public discussions about motherhood, as well as in literature. Yet Gabriele Wohmann's *Paulinchen* still echoes previous novels and previous eras in arguing that a woman who decides to pursue a career does so at the cost of her child's welfare. Hence, the writer's castigating representation of the working mother Christa could be interpreted as calling into question the possibility of viable alternatives to established gender roles as proposed by the women's movement at the time. When read in that way, the narrative effectively reinforces the notion that a life devoted exclusively to one's children is the only option for successful mothering. However, Wohmann supports traditional roles as a *choice* for women in her public statements which, at the same time, do not view motherhood and careers as either/or choices. Attacked by feminists who accused her of undermining

women's advancement by acknowledging such binary alternatives, Wohmann's work was not received as addressing the problem of the gender inequality implied when women have to choose between motherhood and a career. Wohmann was thus subsequently treated as a *persona non grata* in feminist circles, which in turn may have contributed to the lack of scholarly attention the author's works received by female literary critics who championed feminist views in the universities after the early eighties.

Here again, as was seen in the case of Baum and Böll, Wohmann's text was subjected to editors who did not always share her views on gender equality. Instead, the narrative overtly articulates viewpoints propagated by postwar politicians and the male-dominated media, especially those of her covert editor Marcel Reich-Ranicki. What Wohmann thus shares with her fellow writers is that her narrative's imprints on the German social imaginary limited the conceptual possibilities for what is thinkable and acceptable for German women to do. As such, her work also fails to realize its potential to present alternative social role models for adult females. There can be little doubt that the literary establishment, as in the cases of Baum and Böll, was actively involved in what messages Wohmann's audience would register. In this context, it is noteworthy to recall that, compared to other women writers at the time, Wohmann enjoyed an enormous support from publishers and critics alike, enabling her—unlike her peers—to reach a broad mainstream audience.

As ironic as it may seem then, available data suggests that readers after 1945 looking for narratives empowering women with children actually had to turn to the novels dating back to the Third Reich, which in turn might explain the lasting popularity

of writers like Ina Seidel long into the postwar period. Only in post-*Wende* Germany could images of strong, financially and emotionally independent women be found again more frequently in texts of women's literature. Yet as Hera Lind's bestseller *Das Superweib* illustrates, for women with children, such depictions continue to be an exception to the rule, which explains why her heroine cannot serve as model for German women in reality. Thus, her novel implicitly conveys to its readership the dominant discourses that "a woman's place" is still considered to be at home, nurturing her children—everything else remains a fairy tale.

By presenting emancipation as a fairy tale, however, Lind highlights the persisting difficulties for German women to escape their "natural" role of the stay-at-home mother, showing her readership the fallacy of the period's widespread belief that feminism was no longer needed. Furthermore, her narrative invites readers to question a number of stereotypes regarding "bad" mothers, particularly in terms of combining work and motherhood. Most significantly, however, this literary representation argues that, if women want to achieve gender equality, they must find alternative forms of living, outside of the norm of the bourgeois family, which the author presents as responsible for women's lack of agency, independence, and an equally high social status compared to men. Critics, however, mostly downplayed Lind's social critique, as did the author herself. Such feminist themes were deemed "unpopular" with the audience at the time and were expected to make little profit. By embedding her criticism in a modern fairy tale however, Lind circumnavigated her publisher's reservations and was able to reach a broad readership—and her overwhelming success suggests the writer struck a nerve with

her novel's representation of motherhood. Despite Lind's radical message, however, the narrative still frames women primarily as mothers, occluding images of females opting out of motherhood. Therefore, Lind's readers thus continue to receive the message that there is no fully acceptable alternative to becoming a mother.

Monika Peetz's contemporary novel *Die Dienstagsfrauen,* in contrast, features childless characters. But these women are represented only at the margins and in ways the reader would not be likely to identify with. Instead, as I have shown, Peetz's novel focuses on female protagonists as married women with children. In doing so, it frames successful work and motherhood as mutually exclusive. Torn between being a *Rabenmutter* and losing one's individual identity, the author provides readers no images that would enable these women to imagine a happy medium that could impact a positive social imaginary. Likewise, Inger-Maria Mahlke presents motherhood, independence, and happiness as virtually irreconcilable in today's German society. Becoming a *Superweib* who can combine these options remains a fairy tale.

With this project, I have traced the reality of the startling fact that led me on this course: how, despite significant sociopolitical, economic, and legal changes in Germany over the course of more than a century, literary representations not only parallel public discourses on mothers and motherhood, but remain, with the exception of the National Socialist era, strikingly close to what was depicted in texts prominent in the German reading public at the end of the nineteenth century: negative, limiting, "socially acceptable" roles for women and "ideal" mothers are still the norm reproduced in novels of even the present generation. My findings thus reveal profound continuities in the

"successful" roles scripted for adult women since the Wilhelmine era, thus limiting the thinkability of positive, alternative conceptions of women's roles within the German context. To this day, positive representations of successful, happy, and childless adult women are few and far between within Germany's social imaginary. Even in reunited Germany the available literary discourses still refer to the heterosexual married, stay-at-home mother as the social ideal—these texts continue to reproduce century-old ideologies about women in society rather than drawing on resources that had been available in the GDR. Despite the wider positive options open to women in German society today, the unchanged rhetoric of the novels therefore holds Germany's social imaginary about women's position in society in place. Images of women who are mothers, portrayed as belonging at home with their children, and who must eschew all work or entertainment that could impinge on full-time caregiving persist and thus prevent conceivable alternatives for women's available social roles.

Nevertheless, the novels discussed in this study also document the risks their authors took in trying to claim even modest agency as active agents of critique—as writers illustrating the negative effects of the bourgeois family model for German women, a model that restricted them to the stay-at-home mother as the only "socially" acceptable role. In fact, all the novels I examined can be read as intentionally written in opposition to traditional gender roles—despite the fact that they were written or reedited for readers steeped in those norms.

This fact led to a result that I had not anticipated at the onset of my project: there is a line threading through the evidence in my case studies in the lack of diverging female

representations across the historical periods that directly connects to interests of the male-dominated publishing industry and literary establishment. To be precise: the interventions of publishers and critics (that is, their prescribed and enforced edits), often effectively prevented all too critical or revolutionary messages regarding a woman's place in German society from reaching the broad readership that the majority of these novels had attained. Although this area needs further investigation, my findings clearly reveal that readers are not free to choose what messages they receive. My study thus not only documents the existence of discursive tropes and life-scripts that women have internalized over time, and which are connected to the social construction of motherhood, but it also speaks to how these tropes and scripts are established, circulated, and preserved over decades by the literary industry.

Hence, this project not only has broad implications for understanding the persisting social ideal of the stay-at-home mother and what forces keep it in place, it also raises further questions regarding these values and norms that have been seemingly driven by the media. As Gramsci suggests, dominant classes maintain control not primarily through violence and political or economic coercion, but instead through the establishment and reenactment of dominant representations through discourse within specified contexts. The literary industry's interventions with respect to representations of mothers must be seen in this light as they—whether intentionally or not is a topic for future research—serve to maintain the power structures of Germany's society built on the bourgeois family model.

While women seemingly have a choice of social roles, they are actually subject to illusions, to the representations and public debates that naturalize certain subject positions within the social imaginary, thus preserving the social *status quo* and its unequal gender relations. German women may not have been pressured into becoming mothers by violence and coercion, but rather by accepting the internalized role of the mother as the "natural" norm. Yet it appears an odd coincidence that literary representations of motherhood seem to be much more strictly reinforced and promoted in times of political instability, high unemployment, and crises of masculinity—times that Germany faced after WWI, WWII, the late postwar period, as well as after reunification. In fact, as I argue, this suggests that representations of traditional gender roles could have been utilized by the state as a means of managing social, political, and economic turbulences, and to reassert the dominant position of men in society through representations of women as mothers, who depend on their children's fathers. Moreover, since the role of the "good" mother in the novels investigated for this project is seemingly always tied to the values and norms of the middle class, these appear as "natural" to all other classes. As a result, for instance, even disadvantaged mothers of the lower classes, struggling to survive on welfare, refrain from openly revolting against a system that is set up to capitalize on their status, because as the ruled class they, too, identify with the values of the dominant class they hope one day to join.

To conclude, my results suggest that much work still needs to be done concerning the role of the literary establishment as a force apparently serving the interests of the German state. Furthermore, based on my findings, I contend that particularly those

fictional texts intended for a mass audience should be more frequently investigated by scholars who have tended to focus on "serious" literature instead. These narratives were distributed in the hopes of influencing a broad readership, and so they seem to be more likely to reveal ideologies and its hidden mechanisms of oppression—as well as becoming objects of manipulations—than the aesthetic, "high" literature that often attracts a more marginal readership. Moreover, although often dismissed as "popular" or *Trivialliteratur*, I have made the case that bestsellers in particular are cultural artifacts in the sense of Michel Foucault (*Archeology of Knowledge*), since they contain verifiable historical, social, and political messages about social conditions and thus present valuable sources to literary researchers. Related to this assertion, particularly the chapter on Lind has illustrated how her widely read, entertaining novel, supposedly without literary merit as claimed by feminist critics, may nonetheless embody critical messages. As cultural documents, the scholarly value of popular literature, often styled as *Trivialliteratur* in German, should not be underestimated.

Finally, returning to other forms of popular culture's mass media outlets influencing the social imaginary, I propose magazines, advertisements, and films, should be investigated in the future to further clarify how German mass audiences and consumers were and are influenced by representations and discourses of motherhood. This relates to one additional aspect of this project that I did not expect to encounter at the beginning of this project. With the exception of Seidel's novel, all my case-study novels—and some of the novels given shorter treatment, such as Peetz's *Die Dientagsfrauen*—were turned into films which were aired repeatedly on German TV. Of

course, commercially successful novels are often adapted for the screen. However, many of these films were produced by the governmentally owned TV-stations, ARD and ZDF. Therefore, the rationale behind the decision to (re)produce precisely these novels as films deserves some more attention, particularly respective to the state's interests tied to these narratives' depictions of motherhood. Since the shift from novels to films as the most significant mass media outlet beginning in the 1980s, further research thus needs to be done particularly on the representation of motherhood in popular films. A look at specific audiences then might also provide further information on the relationship between images of motherhood, demographics, and class for prevailing ideologies.

In addition, scholars should not disregard an author or a genre merely because of personal or ideological differences. Particularly in the case of Wohmann, as I have delineated, the lack of scholarly engagement with her extensive oeuvre seems almost entirely based on personal taste and on reactions to her relationship with the literary establishment. Yet her works deserve closer inspection, especially by researchers interested in representations of the postwar family. In addition, the notion that feminist critics seemingly have taken the same pathway as the publishing industry, influencing authors by prescribing the way women and mothers can be written about, needs further investigation. Related to this, scholarly critics should also investigate representations of motherhood found in the works of male authors to a greater extent. As my analysis of Böll's novel illustrates, a male writer can very well critique women's subordinate position in society. The works of popular male authors such as Johannes Mario Simmel

who wrote for a mass readership might thus provide some valuable new insights into Germany's social imaginary.

This dissertation is the first study to explore the representation of mothers and motherhood across time in widely read, but not canonical novels that have had a great influence on public discourses and the social imaginary, but have been un(der)studied in the past. As such, it hopes to inspire future research to expand on this topic in multiple ways. Particularly, however, I would like to see the (re)discovery of perhaps thus far unnoticed images of positive alternatives to women's traditional gender roles that could constribute to future public debates, and spur German women to imagine a broader range of social roles and things they *can* do.

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